



LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE

No. XXXII]

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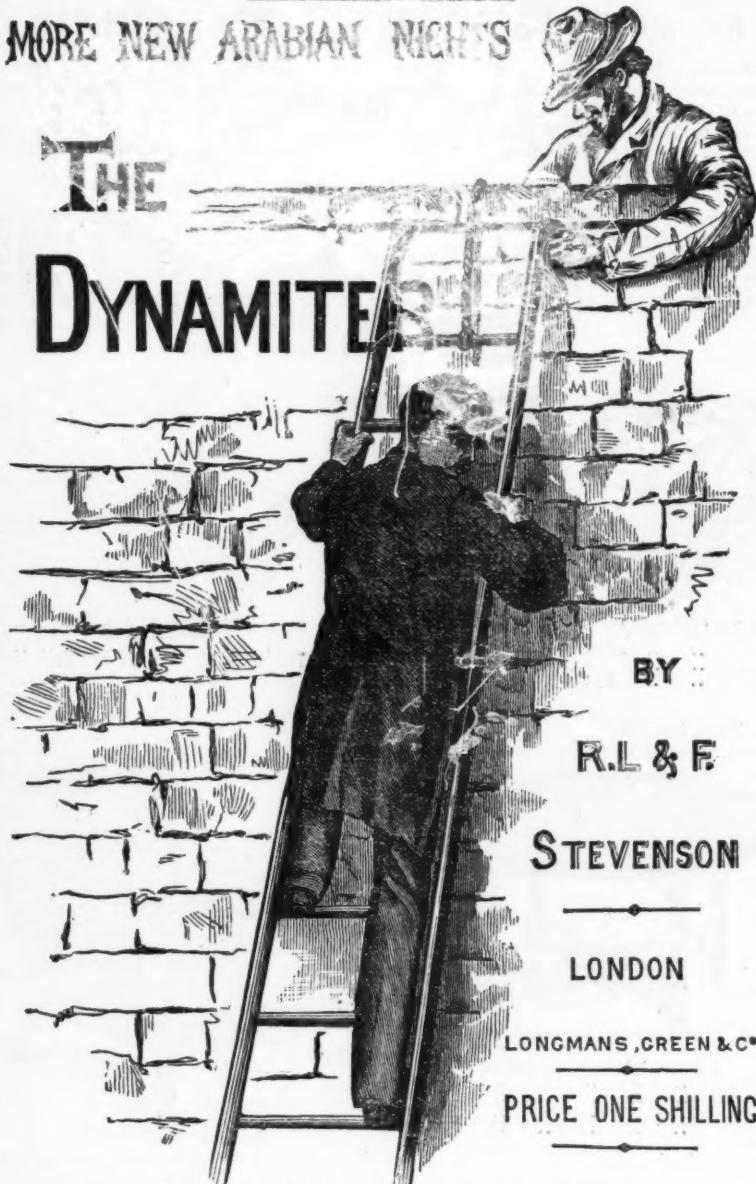
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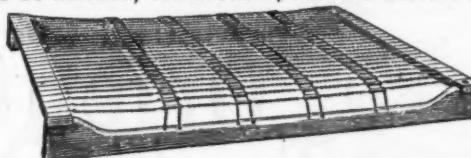
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JUNE 1885.

White Heather :

A NOVEL.

BY WILLIAM BLACK.

CHAPTER XXI.

A LESSON IN FLY-FISHING.

MISS CARRY HODSON returned from Paris in a very radiant mood ; she had had what she called a real good time ; and everything connected with the wedding had gone off most successfully. Her dress, that she had ordered long before she came to the Highlands, was a perfect fit ; Lily Selden made the most charming and beautiful of brides ; and no less a person than a prince (rather swarthy, and hailing from some mysterious region east of the Carpathians) had proposed the health of the bridesmaids, and had made especial mention of the young ladies who had travelled long distances to be present on the auspicious occasion.

However, on the morning after her arrival her equanimity was somewhat dashed. When she went along the passage to the little hall—to see what the morning was like outside—she found waiting there a respectable-looking elderly Highlander, with grizzled locks, who touched his cap to her, and who had her waterproof over his arm. This last circumstance made her suspicious ; instantly she went back to her father.

‘ Who is that man ? ’ she asked.

‘ What man ? ’

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‘Why, an old man, who is waiting there, and he has got my waterproof slung over his arm.’

‘Well, I suppose that is the new gillie.’

‘Isn’t Ronald going down?’ she said, with very evident disappointment.

‘Of course not,’ her father said, with some sharpness. ‘I think you have taken up enough of his time. And just now, when he is getting ready to go away, do you think I could allow him to waste day after day in attending to us? Seems to me it would be more to the point if you put your small amount of brain into devising some means of squaring up with him for what he has done already.’

‘Oh, very well,’ she said—or rather, what she did really say was ‘Oh, vurry well’—and the pretty, pale, attractive face resumed its ordinary complacency, and she went off to make friends with the new gillie. She was on good terms with the old Highlander in about a couple of minutes; and presently they were on their way down to the loch, along with the lad John. Her father was to follow as soon as he had finished his letters.

But she was now to discover, what she had never discovered before, that salmon-fishing on a loch is a rather monotonous affair—unless the fish are taking very freely indeed. For one thing, the weather had settled down into a fine, clear, spring-like calm and quiet that was not at all favourable to the sport. It was very beautiful, no doubt; for sometimes for hours together the lake would be like a sheet of glass—the yellow shores and purple birch-woods all accurately doubled, with nearer at hand the faint white reflections of the snow-peaks in the north stretching out into the soft and deep blue; and when a breath of wind, from some unexpected point of the compass, began to draw a sharp line of silver between earth and water, and then came slowly across the loch to them, ruffling out that magic inverted picture on its way, the breeze was deliciously fresh and balmy, and seemed to bring with it tidings of the secret life that was working forward to the leafiness of summer. They kept well out into the midst of this spacious circle of loveliness; for old Malcolm declared they would be doing more harm than good by going over the fishing-ground; so she had a sufficiently ample view of this great panorama of water and wood and far mountain-slopes. But it grew monotonous. She began to think of Paris, and the brisk, busy days—a hurry of gaiety and pleasure and interest using up every possible minute. She wished she had a book—some knitting

—anything. Why, when Ronald was in the boat—with his quick, sarcastic appreciation of every story she had to tell, of every experience she had to describe—there was always enough amusement and talking. But this old man was hopeless. She asked him questions about his croft, his family, his sheep and cows; and he answered gravely; but she took no interest in his answers, as her father might have done. She was unmistakeably glad to get ashore for lunch—which was picturesque enough, by the way, with that beautiful background all around; and neither her father nor herself was in any hurry to break up the small picnic-party and set to work again.

Nor did they do much better in the afternoon—though her father managed to capture a small eight-pounder; and so, in the evening, before dinner, she went along to Ronald to complain. She found him busy with his books; his gun, and cap, and telescope lying on the table beside him, showed that he had just come in.

‘Ay,’ said he, ‘it’s slow work in weather like this. But will ye no sit down?’—and he went and brought her a chair.

‘No, I thank you,’ said she; ‘I came along to see if you thought there was likely to be any change. Is your glass a good one?’

‘First rate,’ he answered, and he went to the small aneroid and tapped it lightly. ‘It was given me by a gentleman that shot his first stag up here. I think he would have given me his head, he was that pleased. Well, no, Miss Hodson, there’s no much sign of a change. But I’ll tell ye what we’ll do, if you’re tired of the loch, we’ll try one or two of the pools on the Mudal.’

‘You mean the river down there?’

‘There’s not much hope there either—for the water’s low the now; but we might by chance get a little wind; or there are some broken bits in the stream——’

‘But you mean with a fly—how could I throw a fly?’ she exclaimed.

‘Ye’ll never learn younger,’ was the quiet answer. ‘If there’s no change to-morrow, I’ll take ye up the river myself—and at least ye can get some practice in casting——’

‘Oh, no, no,’ said she hurriedly; ‘thank you very much, but I must not take up your time——’

‘I’m no so busy that I cannot leave the house for an hour or two,’ said he—and she understood by his manner that he was ‘putting his foot down,’ in which case she knew she might just

as well give in at once. ‘But I warn ye that it’s a dour river at the best; and not likely to be in good ply; however, we might just happen on one.’ And then he added, by way of explanation, ‘If we should, it will have to be sent to Lord Ailine, ye understand.’

‘Why?’

‘Because the river doesna belong to your fishing; it goes with the shooting.’

‘Oh,’ said she, somewhat coldly. ‘And so, when Lord Ailine gives any one a day’s fishing, he claims whatever fish they may catch?’

‘When his lordship gives a day’s fishing, he does not; but when the keeper does—that’s different,’ was the perfectly simple and respectful answer.

‘Oh, I beg your pardon,’ said she, hastily, and sincerely hoping she had said nothing to wound his feelings. Apparently she had not; for he proceeded to warn her about the necessity of her putting on a thick pair of boots; and he also gently hinted that she might wear on her head something less conspicuous than the bright orange Tam o’ Shanter of which she seemed rather fond.

Accordingly, next morning, instead of sending him a message that she was ready, she walked along to the cottage, accoutred for a thorough stiff day’s work. The outer door was open, so she entered without ceremony; and then tapped at the door of the little parlour, which she proceeded to open also. She then found that Ronald was not alone; there was a young man sitting there—who instantly rose as she made her appearance. She had but a momentary glimpse of him, but she came to the conclusion that the gamekeepers in this part of the world were a good-looking race, for this was a strongly-built young fellow, keen and active, apparently, with a rather pink and white complexion, closely-cropped head, bright yellow moustache, and singularly clear blue eyes. He wore a plain tweed suit; and as he rose he picked up a billycock hat that was lying on the table.

‘I’ll see you to-night, Ronald,’ said he, ‘I’m going off by the mail again to-morrow.’

And as he passed by Miss Carry, he said, very modestly and respectfully—

‘I hope you will have good sport.’

‘Thank you,’ said she, most civilly, for he seemed a well-mannered young man, as he slightly bowed to her in passing, and made his way out.

Ronald had everything ready for the start.

'I'm feared they'll be laughing at us for trying the river on so clear a day,' said he, as he put his big fly-book in his pocket. 'And there's been no rain to let the fish get up.'

'Oh, I don't mind about that,' said she, as he held the door open, and she went out, 'it will be more interesting than the lake. However, I've nothing to say against the lake fishing, for it has done such wonders for my father. I have not seen him so well for years. Whether it is the quiet life, or the mountain air, I don't know, but he sleeps perfectly, and he has entirely given up the bromide of potassium. I do hope he will take the shooting, and come back in the autumn.'

'His lordship was saying there were two other gentlemen after it,' remarked Ronald, significantly.

'Who was saying?'

'His lordship—that was in the house the now when ye came in.'

'Was that Lord Ailine?' she said—and she almost paused in their walk along the road.

'Oh, yes.'

'You don't say! Why, how did he come here?'

'By the mail this morning.'

'With the country people?'

'Just like anybody else,' he said.

'Well, I declare! I thought he would have come with a coach and outriders—in state, you know—'

'What for?' said he impassively. 'He had no luggage, I suppose, but a bag and a waterproof. It's different in the autumn, of course, when all the gentlemen come up, and there's luggage, and the rifles, and the cartridge-boxes—then they have to have a brake or a waggonette.'

'And that was Lord Ailine,' she said, half to herself; and there was no further speaking between them until they had gone past the doctor's cottage and over the bridge and were some distance up 'the strath that Mudal laves'—to quote her companion's own words.

'Now,' said he, as he stopped and began to put together the slender grilse-rod, 'we'll just let ye try a cast or two on this bit of open grass—and we'll no trouble with a fly as yet.'

He fastened on the reel, got the line through the rings, and drew out a few yards' length. Then he gave her the rod; showed

her how to hold it ; and then stood just behind her, with his right hand covering hers.

‘Now,’ said he, ‘keep your left hand just about as steady as ye can—and don’t jerk—this way—’

Of course it was really he who was making these few preliminary casts, and each time the line ran out and fell straight and trembling on the grass.

‘Now try it yourself.’

At first she made a very bad job of it—especially when she tried to do it by main force ; the line came curling down not much more than the rod’s length in front of her, and the more she whipped the closer became the curls.

‘I’m afraid I don’t catch on quite,’ said she, unconsciously adopting one of her father’s phrases.

‘Patience—patience,’ said he ; and again he gripped her hand in his, and the line seemed to run out clear with the gentlest possible forward movement.

And then he put out more line—and still more and more—until every backward and upward swoop of the rod, and every forward cast, was accompanied by a ‘swish’ through the air. This was all very well ; and she was throwing a beautiful, clean line ; but she began to wonder when the bones in her right hand would suddenly succumb and be crunched into a jelly. The weight of the rod—which seemed a mighty engine to her—did not tell on her, for his one hand did the whole thing ; but his grip was terrible ; and yet she did not like to speak.

‘Now try for yourself,’ said he, and he stepped aside.

‘Wait a minute,’ she said—and she shook her hand, to get the life back into it.

‘I did not hurt you ?’ said he, in great concern.

‘We learn in suffering what we teach in song,’ she said, lightly. ‘If I am to catch a salmon with a fly-rod, I suppose I have got to go through something.’

She set to work again ; and, curiously enough, she seemed to succeed better with the longer line than with the short one. There was less jerking ; the forward movement was more even ; and though she was far indeed from throwing a good line, it was very passable for a beginner.

‘You know,’ said she, giving him a good-humoured hint, ‘I don’t feel like doing this all day.’

‘Well, then, we’ll go down to the water now,’ said he, and he took the rod from her.

'But the sky's too bright—there's nothing so bad for fishing as those nasty white clouds.'

They walked down through the swampy grass and hard heather to the banks of the stream; and here he got out his fly-book—a bulged and baggy volume much the worse for wear and weather. And then it instantly occurred to her that this was something she could get for him—the most splendid fly-book and assortment of salmon flies to be procured in London—until it just as suddenly occurred to her that he would have little use for these in Glasgow. She saw him select a large black and gold and scarlet object from that bulky volume; and a few minutes thereafter she was armed for the fray, and he was standing by, watching.

Now the Mudal, though an exceedingly 'dour' salmon-river, is at least easy for a beginner to fish, for there is scarcely anywhere a bush along its level banks. And there were the pools—some of them deep and drumly enough in all conscience; and no doubt there were salmon in them, if only they could be seduced from their lair. For one thing, Ronald had taken her to a part of the stream where she could not, in any case, do much harm by her preliminary whippings of the water.

She began—not without some little excitement, and awful visions of triumph and glory if she should really be able to capture a salmon by her own unaided skill. Of course she caught in the heather behind her sometimes; and occasionally the line would come down in a ghastly heap on the water; but then again it would go fairly out and over to the other bank, and the letting it down with the current and drawing it across—as he had shown her in one or two casts—was a comparatively easy matter. She worked hard, at all events, and obeyed implicitly—until, alas! there came a catastrophe.

'A little bit nearer the bank, if ye can,' said he, 'just a foot nearer.'

She clenched her teeth. Back went the rod with all her might—and forward again with all her might—but midway and overhead there was a mighty crack like that of a horsewhip; and calmly he regarded the line as it fell on the water.

'The fly's gone,' said he—but with not a trace of vexation.

'Oh, Ronald, I'm so sorry!' she cried, for she knew that these things were expensive, even where they did not involve a considerable outlay of personal skill and trouble.

'Not at all,' said he, as he quietly sate down on a dry bunch

of heather, and got out his book again. 'All beginners do that. I'll just show ye in a minute or two how to avoid it. And we'll try a change now.'

Indeed she was in no way loth to sit down on the heather too; and even after he had selected the particular Childers he wanted, she took the book, and would have him tell her the names of all the various flies, which, quite apart from their killing merits, seemed to her beautiful and interesting objects. And finally she said—

'Ronald, my arms are a little tired. Won't you try a cast or two?—I am sure I should learn as much by looking on.'

He did as he was bid; and she went with him; but he could not stir anything. The river was low; the day was clear; there was no wind. But at last they came to a part of the stream where there was a dark and deep pool, and below that a wide bed of shingle, while between the shingle and the bank was a narrow channel where the water tossed and raced before breaking out into the shallows. He drew her a little bit back from the bank and made her take the rod again.

'If there's a chance at all, it's there,' he said. 'Do ye see that stone over there?—well, just try to drop the fly a foot above the stone, and let it get into the swirl.'

She made her first cast—the line fell in a tangled heap about three yards short.

'Ye've got out of the way of it,' said he, and he took the rod from her, let out a little more line, and then gave it her again, standing behind her, with his hand over-gripping hers.

'Now!'

The fly fell a foot short—but clean. The next cast it fell at the precise spot indicated, and was swept into the current, and dragged slowly and jerkily across. Again he made the cast for her, with the same negative result; and then he withdrew his hand.

'That's right—very well done!' he said, as she continued.

'Yes, but what's the use when you have tried—'

She had scarcely got the words out when she suddenly found the line held tight—and tighter—she saw it cut its way through the water, up and towards the bank of the pool above—and down and down was the point of the rod pulled until it almost touched the stream. All this had happened in one wild second.

'Let the line go!—what are ye doing, lassie?' he cried.

The fact was that in her sudden alarm she had grasped both line and rod more firmly than ever; and in another half-second

the fish must inevitably have broken something. But this exclamation of his recalled her to her senses—she let the line go free—got up the rod—and then waited events—with her heart in her mouth. She had not long to wait. It very soon appeared to her as if she had hooked an incarnate flash of lightning; for there was nothing this beast did not attempt to do; now rushing down the narrow channel so close to the bank that a single out-jutting twig must have cut the line; now lashing on the edge of the shallows; twice jerking himself into the air; and then settling down in the deep pool, not to sulk, but to twist and tug at the line in a series of angry snaps. And always it was ‘Oh, Ronald, what shall I do now?’ or, ‘Ronald, what will he do next?’

‘You’re doing well enough,’ said he, placidly. ‘But it will be a long fight; and ye must not let him too far down the stream, or he’ll take ye below the foot bridge. And don’t give him much line; follow him, rather.’

She was immediately called on to act on this advice; for with one determined, vicious rush, away went the salmon down the stream—she after him as well as her woman’s skirts would allow, and always and valourously she was keeping a tight strain on the pliant rod. Alas! all of a sudden her foot caught in a tuft of heather—down she went, prone, her arms thrown forward so that nothing could save her. But did she let go the rod? Not a bit! She clung to it with the one hand; and when Ronald helped her to her feet again, she had no thought of herself at all—all her breathless interest was centred on the salmon. Fortunately that creature had now taken to sulking, in a pool further down; and she followed him, getting in the line the while.

‘But I’m afraid you’re hurt,’ said he.

‘No, no.’

Something was tickling the side of her face. She shifted the grip of the rod, and passed the back of her right hand across her ear; a brief glance showed her that her knuckles were stained with blood. But she took no further heed; for she had to get both hands on the rod again.

‘She has pluck, that one,’ Ronald said to himself; but he said nothing aloud—he wanted her to remain as self-possessed as possible.

‘And what if he goes down to the foot-bridge, Ronald?’ she said, presently.

‘But ye must not let him.’

‘But if he will go?’

‘Then ye’ll give me the rod and I’ll take it under the bridge.’

The fish lay there as heavy and dead as a stone; nothing they could do could stir him an inch.

‘The beast has been at this work before,’ Ronald said. ‘That jagging to get the hook out is the trick of an old hand. But this sulking will never do at all.’

He left her and went further up the stream to the place where the river ran over the wide bed of shingle. There he deliberately walked into the water—picking up a few pebbles as he went—and, with a running leap, crossed the channel and gained the opposite bank. Then he quickly walked down to within a yard or two of the spot where the ‘dour’ salmon lay.

She thought this was very foolish child’s play that he should go and fling little stones at a fish he could not see. But presently she perceived that he was trying all he could to get the pebbles to drop vertically and parallel with the line. And then the object of this device was apparent. The salmon moved heavily forward, some few inches only. Another pebble was dropped. This time the fish made a violent rush up stream that caused Miss Carry’s reel to shriek; and off she set after him (but with more circumspection this time as regards her footing), getting in the line as rapidly as possible as she went. Ronald now came over and joined her—and this was comforting to her nerves.

Well, long before she had killed that fish she had discovered the difference between loch-fishing and river-fishing; but she did kill him in the end; and mightily pleased she was when she saw him lying on the sere wintry grass. Ronald would have had her try again; but she had had enough; it was past lunch-time, and she was hungry; moreover, she was tired; and then again she did not wish that he should waste the whole day. So, when she had sate down for a while, and watched him tie the salmon head-and-tail, they set out for the village again, very well content; while as for the slight wound she had received by her ear catching on a twig of heather when she fell, that was quite forgotten now.

‘And ye are to have the fish,’ said he. ‘I told his lordship this morning you were going to try your hand at the casting; and he said if you got one you would be proud of it, no doubt, and ye were to keep it, of course.’

‘Well, that is very kind; I suppose I must thank him if I see him?’

And she was very curious to know all about Lord Ailine ; and why he should come to Inver-Mudal merely for these few hours ; and what kind of people he brought with him in the autumn. He answered her as well as he could ; and then they went on to other things—all in a very gay and merry mood, for he was as proud as she was over this achievement.

At the same moment Meenie Douglas was in her own little room, engaged on a work of art of a not very ambitious kind. She had lying before her on the table a pencil-sketch in outline of such features of the landscape as could be seen from the window—the loch, the wooded promontories, Ben Clebrig, and the little clump of trees that sheltered the inn ; and she was engaged in making a smaller copy of this drawing, in pen-and-ink, on a paper-cutter of brown wood. She was not much of an artist, perhaps ; but surely these simple outlines were recognisable ; and if they were to be entitled '*A Souvenir*,' and carried away to the south as a little parting present, might they not in some idle moment of the future recall some brief memory of these northern wilds ? So she was at work on this task—and very careful that the lines should be clear and precise—when she heard the sound of voices without—or rather one voice, which presently she recognised to be Ronald's : she could not easily mistake it. And if she were to go to the window, and get him to stop for a minute at the gate, and show him the sketch that she had just about finished—perhaps he would be pleased ?

She went to the window—but instantly drew back. She had just caught a glimpse : it was the American young lady he was walking with—at a time when he was supposed to be so busy ; and he was carrying her rod for her, and her ulster, as well as the salmon ; and they were laughing and gaily talking together, like a pair of lovers almost on this clear spring day. Meenie went slowly back to the table—her face perhaps a trifle paler than usual ; and she sat down, and began to look at the little drawing that she had been rather proud of. But her lips were proud and firm. Why should she give a drawing to any one—more especially to one who was so ready with his friendship and—and so quick to consort with strangers ? The lines on the brown wood seemed cold and uninteresting ; she was no longer anxious that they should suggest an accurate picture ; nay, she pushed the thing away from her, and rose, and went back to the window, and stood idly gazing out there, her lips still proud, her mien defiant.

And then—well, Ronald was going away. Was it worth while

to let pride or self-love come between them and becloud these last few days, when perhaps they might never see each other again? For well she knew of her mother's aims and hopes with regard to herself; and well she knew that—whatever she may have guessed from those verses of Ronald's which assuredly had never been meant for her to see—it was neither for him nor for her to expect that the harsh facts and necessities of the world should give place and yield to a passing fancy, a dream, a kind of wistful, half-poetic shadow of what otherwise might have been. But at least Ronald and she might part friends; nay, they should part friends. And so she returned to the table—overmastering her momentary pride; and she took up the discarded little drawing and regarded it with gentler eyes. For, after all (as she could not forget) Ronald was going away.

CHAPTER XXII.

POETA NON FIT.

IT soon became obvious that the salmon-fishers from the other side of the Atlantic had got into a long spell of deplorably fine weather; and a gentle melancholy settled down upon the souls of the gillies. In vain, morning after morning, the men searched every quarter of the heavens for any sign of even a couple of days' deluge, to flood the rivers and send the kelts down and bring the clean salmon up from the sea. This wild and bleak region grew to be like some soft summer fairyland; the blue loch, and the yellow headlands, and the far treeless stretches of moor lay basking in the sunlight; Ben Loyal's purples and browns were clear to the summit; Ben Clebrig's snows had nearly all melted away. Nor could the discontented boatmen understand how the two strangers should accept this state of affairs with apparent equanimity. Both were now provided with a book; and when the rods had been properly set so as to be ready for any emergency, they could pass the time pleasantly enough in this perfect stillness, gliding over the smooth waters, and drinking in the sweet mountain air. As for Miss Carry, she had again attacked the first volume of Gibbon—for she would not be beaten; and very startling indeed it was when a fish did happen to strike the minnow, to be so suddenly summoned back from Palmyra to

this Highland loch. In perfect silence, with eyes and attention all absented, she would be reading thus—

‘*When the Syrian queen was brought into the presence of Aurelian, he sternly asked her, how she had presumed to rise in arms against the Emperor of Rome? The answer of Zenobia was a prudent mixture of respect and firmness*’—

—when sharp would come the warning cry of Malcolm—‘There he is, Miss!—there he is!’—and she would dash down the historian to find the rod being violently shaken and the reel screaming out its joyous note. Moreover, in this still weather, the unusual visitor not unfrequently brought some other element of surprise with him. She acquired a considerable experience of the different forms of foul-hooking and of the odd manœuvres of the fish in such circumstances. On one occasion the salmon caught himself on the minnow by his dorsal fin; and for over an hour contented himself with rolling about under water without once showing himself, and with such a strain that she thought he must be the champion fish of the lake: when at last they did get him into the boat he was found to be a trifle under ten pounds. But, taken altogether, this cultivation of literature, varied by an occasional ‘fluke’ of a capture, and these placid and dreamlike mornings and afternoons, were far from being as satisfactory as the former and wilder days when Ronald was in the boat, even with all their discomforts of wind and rain and snow.

By this time she had acquired another grievance.

‘Why did you let him go, pappa, without a single word?’ she would say, as they sate over their books or newspapers in the evening. ‘It was my only chance. You could easily have introduced yourself to him by speaking of the shooting—’

‘You know very well, Carry,’ he would answer—trying to draw her into the fields of common sense—‘I can say nothing about that till I see how mother’s health is.’

‘I am sure she would say yes if she saw what the place has done for you, pappa; salmon-fishing has proved better for you than bromide of potassium. But that’s not the trouble at all. Why did you let him go? Why did you let him spend the evening at the doctor’s?—and the next morning he went about the whole time with Ronald! My only chance of spurning a lord, too. Do they kneel in this country, pappa, when they make their declaration; or is that only in plays? Never mind; it would be all the same. “No, my lord; the daughter of a free Republic cannot wed a relic of feudalism; farewell, my lord, fare-

well! I know that you are heartbroken for life; but the daughter of a free Republic must be true to her manifest destiny."

'Oh, be quiet!'

'And then the girls at home, when I got back, they would all have come crowding around: "Do tell, now, did you get a British nobleman to propose, Carry?" "What do you imagine I went to Europe for?" "And you rejected him?" "You bet your pile on that. Why you should have seen him writhe and squirm on the floor when I spurned him! I spurned him, I tell you I did—the daughter of a free Republic"—'

'Will you be quiet!'

'But it was really too bad, pappa!' she protested. 'There he was lounging around all the morning. And all I heard him say was when he was just going—when he was on the mail-car, "Ronald," he called out, "have you got a match about you?"—and he had a wooden pipe in his hand. And that's all I know about the manners and conversation of the British nobility; and what will they say of me at home?'

'When does Ronald go?' he would ask; and this, at least, was one sure way of bringing her back to the paths of sanity and soberness; for the nearer that this departure came, the more concerned she was about it, having some faint consciousness that she herself had a share of the responsibility.

And in another direction, moreover, she was becoming a little anxious. No message of any kind had arrived from the *Chicago Citizen*. Now she had written to Miss Kerfoot before she left for Paris; her stay in the French capital had extended to nearly three weeks; there was the space occupied in going and returning; so that if Jack Huysen meant to do anything with the verses it was about time that that should appear. And the more she thought of it, the more she set her heart on it, and hoped that Ronald's introduction to the reading public would be a flattering one and one of which he could reasonably be proud. Her father had it in his power to secure his material advancement; and that was well enough; but what if it were reserved for her to confer a far greater service on him? For if this first modest effort were welcomed in a friendly way, might he not be induced to put forth a volume, and claim a wider recognition? It need not interfere with his more practical work; and then, supposing it were successful? Look at the status it would win for him—a thing of far more value in the old country, where society is gradated into ranks, than in her country, where every one (except hotel-clerks,

as she insisted) was on the same plane. He would then be the equal of anybody—even in this old England; she had at least acquired so far a knowledge of English society. And if he owed the first suggestion and impulse to her?—if she were to be the means, in however small and tentative a fashion, of his ultimately establishing his fame? That he could do so if he tried, she never thought of doubting. She saw him every day; and the longer she knew him the more she was certain that the obvious mental force that seemed to radiate from him in the ordinary conversation and discussion of everyday life only wanted to be put into a definite literary channel to make its mark. And was not the time ripe for a poet? And it was not Edinburgh, or Glasgow, or London that had nowadays to decide on his merits, but two great continents of English-speaking people.

At length came the answer to her urgent prayer: a letter from Miss Kerfoot, and a copy of the *Chicago Citizen*. The newspaper she opened first; saw with delight that a long notice—a very long notice indeed—had been accorded to the verses she had sent; and with a proud heart she put the paper in her pocket, for careful reading when she should get down to the lake. Miss Kerfoot's letter she glanced over; but it did not say much; the writer observed that Mr. Jack Huysen had only seemed half pleased when informed of Carry's extraordinary interest in the phenomenal Scotch gamekeeper; and, referring to the article in the *Citizen*, she said Jack Huysen had entrusted the writing of it to Mr. G. Quincy Regan, who was, she understood, one of the most cultured young men in Chicago, and likely to make quite a reputation for himself ere long. There were some other matters mentioned in this letter; but they need not detain us here.

Miss Carry was in very high spirits as she set forth from the inn, with her father, to walk down to the boats. They met Ronald, too, on their way; he was accompanied by the man who was to take his place after his leaving; and Miss Carry could not help comparing the two of them as they came along the road. But, after all, it was not outward appearance that made the real difference between men; it was mental stature; she had that in her pocket which could show to everybody how Ronald was a head and shoulders over any of his peers. And she took but little interest in the setting up of the rods, or the selection of the minnows; she wanted to be out on the lake, alone, in the silence, to read line by line and word by word this introduction of her hero to the public.

The following is the article :—

‘A REMARKABLE LITERARY DISCOVERY—OUR FELLOW-CITIZENS ABROAD—ANOTHER RUSTIC POET—CHICAGO CLAIMS HIM. It may be in the recollection of some of our readers that a few years ago a small party of American tourists, consisting of Curtis H. Mack, who was one of our most distinguished major-generals in the rebellion, and is now serving on the Indian frontier; his niece Miss Hettie F. Doig, a very talented lady and contributor to several of our best periodicals; and John Grimsby Patterson, editor of the Baltimore *Evening News*, were travelling in Europe, when they had the good fortune to discover an Irish poet, Patrick Milligan, who had long languished in obscurity, no doubt the victim of British jealousy as well as of misrule. Major-General Mack interested himself in this poor man, and, in conjunction with William B. Stevens, of Cleveland, Ohio, had him brought over to this country, where they were eventually successful in obtaining for him a postmastership in New Petersburg, Conn., leaving him to devote such time as he pleased to the service of the tuneful nine. Mr. Milligan’s Doric reed has not piped to us much of late years; but we must all remember the stirring verses which he wrote on the occasion of Colonel George W. Will’s nomination for Governor of Connecticut. It has now been reserved for another party of American travellers, still better known to us than the above, for they are no other than our esteemed fellow-citizen, Mr. Josiah Hodson and his brilliant and accomplished daughter, Miss Caroline Hodson, to make a similar discovery in the Highlands of Scotland; and in view of such recurring instances, we may well ask whether there be not in the mental alertness of our newer civilisation a capacity for the detection and recognition of intellectual merit which exists not among the deadening influences of an older and exhausted civilisation. It has sometimes been charged against this country that we do not excel in arts and letters; that we are in a measure careless of them; that political problems and material interests occupy our mind. The present writer, at least, is in no hurry to repel that charge, odious as it may seem to some. We, as Americans, should remember that the Athenian Republic, with which our western Republic has nothing to fear in the way of comparison, when it boasted its most lavish display of artistic and literary culture, was no less conspicuous for its moral degeneracy and political corruption. It was in the age of Pericles and of Phidias, of Socrates and Sophocles, of Euripides and Aristophanes and

Thucydides, that Athens showed herself most profligate ; private licence was unbridled ; justice was bought and sold ; generals incited to war that they might fill their pockets out of the public purse ; and all this spectacle in striking contrast with the manly virtues of the rude and unlettered kingdom of Sparta, whose envoys were laughed at because they had not the trick of Athenian oratory and casuistry. We say, then, that we are not anxious to repel this charge brought against our great western Republic, that we assign to arts and letters a secondary place ; on the contrary, we are content that the over-cultivation of these should fatten on the decaying and effete nations of Europe, as phosphorus shines in rotten wood.'

Now she had determined to read every sentence of this article conscientiously, as something more than a mere intellectual treat ; but, as she went on, joy did not seem to be the result. The reference to Patrick Milligan and the postmastership in Connecticut she considered to be distinctly impertinent ; but perhaps Jack Huysen had not explained clearly to the young gentleman all that she had written to Emma Kerfoot ? Anyhow, she thought, when he came to Ronald's little Highland poem, he would perhaps drop his Athenians, and talk more like a reasonable human being.

'That the first strain from the new singer's lyre should be placed at the services of the readers of the *Citizen*, we owe to the patriotism of the well-known and charming lady whose name we have given above ; nor could the verses have fallen into better hands. In this case there is no need that Horace should cry to Tyndaris—

*O matre pulchrâ filia pulchrior,
Quem criminosis cunque voles modum
Pones iambis, sive flamma
Sive mari libert Hadriano.*

Moreover, we have received a hint that this may not be the last piece of the kind with which we may be favoured ; so that we have again to thank our fair fellow-towns-woman for her kindly attention. But lest our readers may be growing weary of this *prolegomenon*, we will at once quote this latest utterance of the Scottish muse, which has come to us under such favourable auspices.'

Here followed Ronald's poor verses, that perhaps looked insignificant enough, after this sonorous trumpet-blaring. The writer proceeded :—

' Now certain qualities in this composition are so obvious that we need hardly specify them ; we give the writer credit for simplicity, pathos, and a hearty sympathy with the victims of the tyrannical greed of the chase-loving British landlord. But it is with no intent of looking a gift-horse in the mouth (which would be a poor return for the courtesy of the lady who has interested herself in the rustic bard) if we proceed to resolve this piece into its elements, that we may the more accurately cast the horoscope of this new applicant for the public applause. To begin with, the sentiment of nostalgia is but a slender backbone for any work of literary art. In almost every case it is itself a fallacy. What were the conditions under which these people—arbitrarily and tyrannically, it may have been—were forced away from their homes ? Either they were bad agriculturists or the land was too poor to support them ; and in either case their transference to a more generous soil could be nothing but a benefit to them. Their life must have been full of privations and cares. *Forsan et haec olim meminisse juvabit* ; but the pleasure ought to lie in thinking of the escape ; so that we maintain that to base any piece of literary work on such a false sentiment as nostalgia is seen to be leads us to suspect the *veracity* of the writer and calls upon us to be on our guard. Moreover, we maintain that it is of the essence of pastoral and idyllic poetry to be cheerful and jocund ; and it is to be observed that sadness prevails in poetry only when a nation has passed its youth and becomes saturated with the regret of old age. We prefer the stories told

*Where Corydon and Thyrsis met
Are at their savoury dinner set ;*

and the lyrist when he sings

*Dulce ridentem Lalagen amabo,
Dulce loquentem ;*

and we hold that when the poets of a nation are permeated by a lackadaisical sentiment—when they have the candour to style themselves the idle singers of an empty day—when the burden of their song is regret and weariness and a lamentation over former joys—then it is time for such poets and the nation they represent to take a back seat in the lecture-halls of literature, and give way to the newer and stronger race that is bound to dominate the future.'

She read no further ; and it is a great pity that she did not ;

for the writer by-and-by went on to say some very nice things about these unlucky verses ; and even hinted that here was a man who might be benefited by coming to stay in Chicago—‘ the future capital of the future empire of the world ’—and by having his eyes opened as to the rate of progress possible in these modern days ; and wound up with a most elaborate compliment to the intellectual perspicacity and judgment of Miss Carry herself. She did not read beyond what is quoted above for the simple reason that she was in a most violent rage, and also extremely mortified with herself for being so vexed. She tore the newspaper into shreds, and crushed these together, and flung them into the bottom of the boat. Her cheeks were quite pale ; her teeth set ; her eyes burning ; and through all the anger of her disappointment ran the shame of the consciousness that it was she who had exposed Ronald to this insult. What though he should never know anything about it ? Her friends in Chicago would know. And it was the man that she wanted to glorify, and make a hero of, who had, through her instrumentality, been subjected to the pedantic criticism, the pretentious analyses, and, worst of all, the insulting patronage of this unspeakable ass. Suddenly she regretted the destruction of the newspaper ; for she had forgotten his name. No matter ; she could soon get hold of that again ; and she would not forget it—nor yet Jack Huysen’s share in this transaction.

She was very silent and reserved at lunch-time ; and her father began to believe that, after all, in spite of her repeated assurances, their ill-luck with the fishing was weighing on her spirits.

‘ You know, Carry,’ said he, ‘ it is not in the nature of things that weather like this can last in the Highlands of Scotland. It is notoriously one of the wettest places in the world. There *must* be rain coming soon ; and then think of all the fish that will be coming up in shoals, and what a time we shall have.’

‘ I am not disappointed with the fishing at all, pappa,’ she said. ‘ I think we have done very well.’

‘ What is the matter, then ? ’

‘ Oh, nothing.’

And then she said—

‘ Well, I will tell you, pappa. I asked Jack Huysen to do me a very particular favour ; and he did not do it ; and when I next see Jack Huysen, I think he will find it a very cold day.’

The words were mysterious ; but the tone was enough.

And all the afternoon she sate in the stern of the coble and

brooded, composing imaginary letters to the Editor of the *New York Herald*, to the Editor of the *Nation*, to the Editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, to the Editor of *Puck*, and a great many other journals, all of these phantom epistles beginning 'As an American girl I appeal to you,' and proceeding to beg of the editor to hold up to merciless scorn a certain feeble, shallow, and impertinent article (herewith enclosed) which had appeared in the *Chicago Citizen*. And on the way home, too, in the evening, she began to question her father as to his personal acquaintance with editors and journalists, which seemed to be of the slightest; and she at length admitted that she wanted some one to reply—and sharply—to an article that had been written about a friend of hers.

'You let that alone,' her father said. 'It's not very easy for any one to meddle in the politics of our country without coming out more or less tattooed; for they don't mind what they say about you; and you are very well to be out of it.'

'It isn't politics at all,' she said. 'And—and—the article is written about a friend of mine—and—I want to have the writer told what a fool he is.'

'But probably he would not believe it,' her father said, quietly.

'He would see that some one else believed it.'

'I am not sure that that would hurt him much,' was the unsatisfactory answer.

When they drew near to Inver-Mudal she found herself quite afraid and ashamed at the thought of their possibly meeting Ronald. Had she not betrayed him? He had sought for no recognition; probably he was too proud; or too manly, and careless about what any one might write of him; it was she who had put him into that suppliant attitude, and brought upon him the insolent encouragement of a microcephalous fool. This was the return she had made him for all his kindness to her father and to herself. Why, he had told her to burn the verses! And to think that she should have been the means of submitting them to the scrutiny and patronage of this jackanapes—and that Mr. J. C. Huysen should as good as say 'Well, this is what we think of your prodigy'—all this was near bringing tears of rage to eyes. For Miss Carry, it must be repeated, was 'a real good fellow,' and very loyal to her friends; and impatient of injustice done them; and perhaps, unconsciously to herself, she may have felt some of the consternation of the wild animal whose place is to protect her mate with her superior feminine

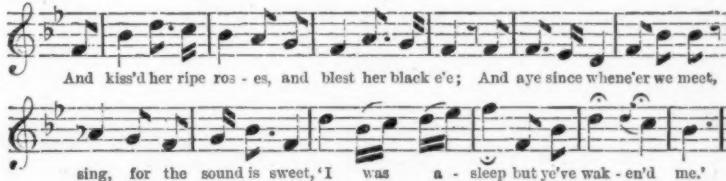
watchfulness, and who, through neglect or carelessness, allows the destroyer to come in and slay. In any case, it certainly promised to be 'a very cold day' for Mr. Jack Huysen when these two should meet in Chicago.

That night, after dinner, father and daughter went out for a stroll ; for by this time the moon was drawing to its full again ; and all the world lay peaceful and silent in the wan, clear light. They had not emerged from the trees in front of the inn on to the white pathway of the road when a sound in the distance caught Miss Carry's ears ; and instantly she touched her father's arm and drew him back into the shadow. She wanted to hear what song this was that Ronald was singing on his homeward way.

At first she could make out nothing but fragments of the air — clear, and soft, and distant —



but as he drew nearer the words became more distinct :



So clear, and penetrating, and careless, and joyous was this singing ! — her heart was stirred with pride as she listened ; this was not the voice of a man who would trouble himself about any whipper-snapper criticism ; — nay she began to wonder that she had wasted so much indignation on so trivial a thing. Then there was a sudden silence, except for his footfall ; and presently the dark figure appeared out there on the white road — his shadow a sharp black in front of him, the little terrier trotting behind him — and in a minute or so the long swinging stride had carried him past their ambush on his homeward way to the cottage.

'What a splendid voice that fellow has got !' her father said,

as they also now went out on to the white highway, and took the opposite direction.

‘He seems to be very well contented with himself,’ she said—rather absently.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A LAST DAY ON THE LOCH.

RONALD came down to the loch side the next morning, just as she was about to get into the coble—her father having started a few minutes before.

‘I hear you have not been doing very well with the fishing,’ said he, in that brisk, business-like fashion of his.

‘The salmon appear to have gone away somewhere,’ she said.

‘Oh, but that will never do,’ said he, cheerfully. ‘We must try and make some alteration.’

He took the key of the kennels from his pocket.

‘Here, Johnnie, lad, ye may go and take the dogs out for a run.’

Was Ronald, then, coming with her? Her eyes brightened with anticipation; there was a welcome in the look of her face that ought to have been sufficient reward for him. Nor had she the courage to protest—though she knew that his time was drawing short now. As for the salmon—well, it was not about salmon she was thinking exclusively.

‘They say a change of gillie sometimes brings a change of luck,’ said he, good-naturedly; and he began to overhaul the tackle, substituting smaller minnows for those already on. ‘And I think we will try down at the other end of the loch this time. We will make sure of some trout in any case.’

‘But it is so far away, Ronald: are you certain you can afford the time?’ she was bound, in common fairness, to say.

‘Oh, yes, I can afford the time,’ said he, ‘even if this should have to be my last day on the loch. Besides, if we do not treat you well, maybe you’ll never come back.’

‘And what is the use of our coming back, when you won’t be here?’ she was on the point of saying—but she did not say it, fortunately.

Then they set forth, on this still, summer-like day; and they hailed the other boat in passing, and told them of their intended

voyage of exploration. Indeed their prospects of sport at the setting-out were anything but promising ; the long levels of the lake were mostly of a pale glassy blue and white ; and the little puffs of wind, that stirred the surface here and there into a shimmer of silver, invariably died down again, leaving the water to become a mirror once more of rock and tree and hill. But she was well content. This was an unknown world into which they were now penetrating ; and it was a good deal more beautiful than the upper end of the lake (where the best fishing ground was) with which they had grown so familiar. Here were hanging woods coming right down to the water's edge ; and lofty and precipitous crags stretching away into the pale blue sky ; and winding bays and picturesque shores where the huge boulders, green and white and yellow with lichen, and the rich velvet moss, and the withered bracken, and the silver-clear stems of the birch-trees were all brilliant in the sun. The only living creatures that seemed to inhabit this strange, silent region were the birds. A pair of eagles slowly circled round and round, but at so great a height that they were but a couple of specks which the eye was apt to lose ; black-throated divers and golden-eyed divers, disturbed by these unusual visitors, rose from the water and went whirring by to the upper stretches of the lake ; a hen-harrier hovered in mid air, causing a frantic commotion among the smaller birds beneath ; the curlews, now wheeling about in pairs, uttered their long, warning whistle ; the peewits called angrily, flying zig-zag, with audible whuffing of their soft broad wings ; the brilliant little redshanks flew like a flash along the shore, just skimming the water ; and two great wild-geese went by overhead, with loud, harsh croak. And ever it was Ronald's keen eye that first caught sight of them ; and he would draw her attention to them ; and tell her the names of them all. And at last—as they were coming out of one of the small glassy bays, and as he was idly regarding the tall and rocky crags that rose above the birch woods—he laughed slightly.

‘ Ye glaiket things,’ said he, as if he were recognising some old friends, ‘ what brings ye in among the sheep?’

‘ What is it, Ronald ?’ she asked—and she followed the direction of his look towards those lofty crags, but could make out nothing unusual.

‘ Dinna ye see the hinds ?’ he said quietly.

‘ Where—where ?’ she said, in great excitement ; for she had not seen a single deer all the time of her stay.

‘At the edge of the brown corrie—near the sky-line. There were three of them—dinna ye see them?’

‘No, I don’t!’ she said, impatiently.

‘Do ye see the two sheep?’

‘I see two white specks—I suppose they’re sheep.’

‘Well—just above them.’

But the boat was slowly moving all this time; and presently the gradual change in their position brought one of the hinds clear into view on the sky-line. The beautiful creature, with its graceful neck, small head, and upraised ears, was evidently watching them, but with no apparent intention of making off; and presently Miss Carry, whose eyes were becoming better accustomed to the place, could make out the other two hinds, one of them lying on the grass, the other contentedly feeding, and paying no heed whatever to the passing boat.

‘I thought you said the sheep drove them away,’ she said to him.

‘It’s the men and the dogs mostly,’ he answered. ‘Sometimes they will come in among the sheep like that, if the feeding tempts them. My word, that would be an easy stalk now—if it was the season.’

‘I should not want to kill one of these pretty creatures if I were a deerstalker,’ she said; ‘but if it was one of those big stags, with the huge horns that you could hang up—’

‘Look out—look out! There he is!’

The fact is they had forgotten all about the fishing; and it was only the natural quickness of his eye that was attracted by the sudden shaking of the rod. In an instant, stags, hinds, and all similar creatures were driven from her mind; for this wild animal in the water was giving her quite enough to do. Away it went, this way and that; now fighting and tugging below; again splashing and churning on the smooth surface; and, of course, the very stillness of the loch made the beast appear exceptionally huge and fierce. What was her surprise, therefore, to hear him say, calmly—

‘I’m thinking it’s a trout.’

‘If you felt the way he was going on, you would think differently,’ said she, with some confidence.

‘Well, that’s true,’ said he, ‘that’s true—you should know best. Maybe he is a salmon that has been a good while up from the sea. He looked to me very dark whatever.’

At the same moment the fish flung himself from the water, and smashed in again.

‘It’s a trout,’ said he, ‘or maybe, one of them they call feroxes. It’s a good-sized fish anyway.’

Whatever the weight of the creature may have been, his strength and activity were undeniable. There was never a pretence of sulking; but a continual racing and plunging, and pulling, and jerking, making a continual demand on Miss Carry’s judgment and presence of mind, and also on the strength and dexterity of her wrist. And even towards the inevitable end, he seemed resolved altogether not to be captured. He would not look near the boat. Again and again, as he appeared to be coming easily through the water, there was a savage little dive, and another tugging and jerking below.

‘Surely he must be a big fish, Ronald,’ she said, judging chiefly by the effect on her arms.

‘He’s a lively fellow, anyway,’ was the cautious reply.

But when at length, after all his unavailing plunges, he was swiftly transfixed and landed in the bottom of the boat, her surprise was not occasioned by his weight. This was a kind of creature she had never seen before—a short, deep, heavy-shouldered fish, with a good deal of coarse red in its colour, and with a prodigious under-jaw and snout.

‘What is that, Ronald?’ she said, staring at her capture with some awe.

‘Well,’ said he, with a smile, ‘some would call it a *Salmo ferox*; but it’s hard to say just exactly what a *ferox* is.’

‘Has it got three rows of teeth, Ronald?’ the gillie at the bow said.

‘Yes, it has. Now what do ye say it is, Malcolm?’

‘I am no sure,’ the old gillie said, shaking his head.

‘He’s a good eight pounds weight, anyway,’ Ronald proceeded to observe, as he held up the strange-looking animal, ‘and if he’s a trout he’s a fine one; and if he’s a *Salmo ferox*—well, Miss Hodson, ye should just get him stuffed in Inverness.’

‘Is it worth that?’ she said, with some surprise. ‘Why, I would rather have one of those splendid salmon stuffed.’

‘But they are not so rare about here as a creature like that,’ he answered; and the big trout, or *ferox*, whichever it was, was forthwith and carefully deposited in the well.

When they resumed their quiet pulling round the little bays,

they found that the three hinds were no longer in view; but there were plenty of other things to claim their attention on this solitary voyage. What, for example, was this great circular mass of stones standing on a projecting promontory? These were the remains, he explained to her, of a Pictish fort. Another, in better preservation, was on the opposite shore; and, if she cared to visit it, she might make her way into the hollow passages constructed between the double line of wall, if she were not afraid of adders, nor yet of some of the uncemented stones falling upon her.

‘And who were the Picts?’ she said, placidly.

He looked at her—fearing that she was joking. But when he saw that she was quite grave, he replied that the further he had read about those people the less he knew about them, and that he had arrived at a very dire suspicion that he was no more ignorant than the learned gentlemen who had laid down so many very positive theories.

‘And what are these?’ she said, indicating the ruins of certain circles formed on the hill-plateaus just above the loch.

‘They’re down in the Ordnance Survey as “hut-circles”,’ he said, ‘but that is all I know about them.’

‘At all events, there must have been plenty of people living here at one time?’

‘I suppose so.’

‘Well, I don’t think I ever saw any place in our country looking quite as lonely as that,’ she said, regarding the voiceless solitudes of wood and hill and crag. ‘Seems as if with us there was always some one around—camping out, or something—but I dare say in Dacotah or Idaho you would get lonelier places than this even. Well, now, what do they call it?’ she asked, as an afterthought.

‘What?—the strath here?’

‘Yes.’

‘I suppose they would call it part of Strath-Naver.’

The mere mention of Strath-Naver struck a chill to her heart. It recalled to her how she had betrayed him by sending those harmless verses across the Atlantic, and subjecting them to the insolence of a nincompoop’s patronage. And if Ronald should ever get to know? Might not some busybody send him a copy of the paper? These Scotch people had so many relatives and friends all through the States. Or perhaps his brother in Glasgow might have some correspondent over there? She dared not look him in the face, she felt so guilty; and once or twice she was

almost on the point of confessing everything, and begging for his forgiveness, and getting him to promise that he would not read the article should it ever be sent to him.

And then it occurred to her as a very strange thing that from the moment of Ronald's appearance that morning at the loch-side until now she had never even given a thought to what had caused her so much annoyance the day before. His very presence seemed to bring with it an atmosphere of repose and safety and self-confidence. When she had seen him go stalking by on the previous night, she had instantly said to herself—'Oh, that is not the kind of man to worry about what is said of him.' And this morning, when he came down to the boat, she had never thought of him as a criticised and suffering poet, but as—well, as the Ronald that all of them knew and were familiar with—self-reliant, good-natured, masterful in his way, and ever ready with a laugh, and a song, and a jest, save when there was any young lady there, to make him a little more demure and respectful in his manner. Ronald a disappointed poet?—Ronald suffering agony because a two-for-a-quarter kind of a creature out there in Chicago did not think well of him? She ventured to lift her eyes a little. He was not looking her way at all. He was regarding the shore intently; and there was a quiet and humorous smile on the hard-set, sun-tanned face.

'There are six—seven—blackcocks; do ye see them?'

'Oh, yes; what handsome birds they are!' she said, with a curious sense of relief.

'Ay,' said he, 'the lads are very friendly amongst themselves just now; but soon there will be wars and rumours of wars when they begin to set up house each for himself. There will be many a pitched battle on those knolls there. Handsome? Ay, they're handsome enough; but handsome is as handsome does. The blackcock is not nearly as good a fellow as the grousecock, that stays with his family, and protects them, and gives them the first warning cry if there's danger. These rascals there wander off by themselves, and leave their wives and children to get on as they can. They're handsome—but they're ne'er-do-wells. There's one thing: the villain has a price put on his head; for a man would rather bring down one old cock thumping on the grass than fill his bag with grey hens.'

A disappointed poet indeed! And she was so glad to find him talking in his usual half-bantering careless fashion (that he should talk in any other way was only a wild suggestion of her own

conscience, struck with a qualm on the mention of Strath-Naver) that she made many inquiries about the habits of black game and similar creatures ; and was apparently much interested ; and all the while was vowing within herself that she would think no more of the mortifying disappointment she had met with, but would give up this last day on the loch wholly to such fancies and quiet amusements as she would like to look back upon in after hours.

And a very pleasant day they spent in this still, silent, beautiful region, cut off from all of the world, as it were. There were plenty of trout, and therefore there was plenty of occupation ; moreover, one or two good-sized sea-trout added to the value of the basket. Nor was this solitary district quite so untenanted as she had supposed. About mid-day it occurred to her that she was becoming hungry ; and then the wild reflection flashed on her that the lunch was in the other boat—some eight miles away. She confided her perplexity—her despair—to Ronald.

‘It is my fault,’ he said, with vexation very visible in his face. ‘I should have remembered. But—but—’ he added, timidly—for he was not accustomed to ministering to the wants of young ladies—‘I could get ye some bread and a drink of milk, if that would do.’

‘What, right here ?’

‘Yes.’

‘Why, nothing could be better !’

‘Or I could cook ye one of the sea-trout,’ he suggested.

She began to laugh.

‘And I thought we were in a wilderness—the first people who had ever explored this end of the lake—and it turns out to be a land flowing with milk and honey. Well, so much the better ; for I’m vurry hungry ; and if you could get some bread, Ronald—’

They were rowing the boat ashore by this time ; and when they had got to land, he leaped on to the beach, and presently disappeared. In little more than a quarter of an hour he was back again, bringing with him a substantial loaf of home-made bread and a large jug of milk.

‘Well done !’ she said. ‘There’s plenty for all of us. Lend me your knife, Ronald.’

‘Oh, no,’ said he, ‘it’s for you.’

And a hard fight she had of it, ere she could get the two men to accept a fair division, but she had her way in the end ; and Ronald, seeing that she was determined they should share the milk also (she drank first, and handed the jug to him quite as a matter of course)

swiftly and stealthily pulled off the cup from his whisky-flask, and old Malcolm and he drank from that, pouring the milk into it from the jug. It was a frugal pic-nic ; but she was very happy ; and she was telling him that when he came to Chicago, and they were showing him the beauties of Lake Michigan, they might give him a grander luncheon than this, but none more comfortable.

In the afternoon they set out for home, picking up a few more trout by the way ; and when they at length drew near to the upper waters of the lake they found the other boat still pursuing its unwearied round. Moreover Mr. Hodson's strict attention to business had been rewarded by the capture of a handsome fish of sixteen pounds ; whereas they had nothing but a miscellaneous collection of brown trout and white trout, with the doubtful ferox. But, just as they were thinking of going ashore, for the dusk was now coming on, a most extraordinary piece of luck befell them. Miss Carry was scarcely thinking of the rods when the sudden shriek of one of the reels startled her out of her idle contemplation.

‘ Surely that is a salmon, Ronald !’ she cried, as she instantly grasped the rod and got it up.

He did not stay to answer, for his business was to get in the other line as fast as possible. But he had just got this second rod into his hand, when lo ! there was a tugging and another scream of a reel—there was now a salmon at each of the lines ! It was a position of the direst danger—for a single cross rush of either of the fish must inevitably break both off—and how were they to be kept separate, with both rods confined to one boat ? Ronald did not lose his head.

‘ Row ashore, Malcolm—row ashore, man !’ he shouted—‘ fast as ever ye can, man !’

Nor did he wait until the bow had touched land ; he slipped over the edge of the boat while as yet the water was deep enough to take him up to the waist ; and away he waded, taking the one rod with him, and slowly increasing the distance between the two fish. By the time he got ashore, there was a hundred yards or so between them ; and he did not attempt to play this salmon at all ; he gave it plenty of law ; and merely waited to see the end of Miss Carry's struggle.

She hardly knew what had happened, except that Ronald's going away had left her very nervous and excited and helpless. How was she ever to land a fish unless he was at her shoulder, directing

her? But by this time old Malcolm had jammed the bow of the boat on to the beach, had got in the oars, and now sate patiently waiting, clip in hand.

The fish was not a very game one, though he was no kelt.

‘Put a good strain on him, Miss,’ old Malcolm said—who had been taking a sly look round. ‘Ronald’s keeping the other one for ye.’

‘What do you say?’ she called to him—rather breathlessly.

‘Ronald will be wanting ye to play the other fish too,’ said the old man. ‘And a wonderful fine thing, if we can get them both—oh yes, indeed. It is not an ordinary thing to hook two salmon at once and land them both—I wass neffer seeing that done except once before.’

‘Beast!’ she said, between her teeth—for the fish made a desperate rush away out into the loch, with a magnificent flourish in the air as a finish. But no harm was done; indeed, it was about his last strong effort to free himself. Yard after yard of the line was got in again; his struggles to get away grew less and less vigorous; at last the old Highlander made an adventurous swoop with the clip, and was successful in landing the brilliant creature in the bottom of the boat.

‘Now, Miss,’ he cried, ‘leave him to me—leave him to me. Quick, get ashore, and try for the other one. And will you take the clip?’

He was greatly excited by this unusual adventure; and so was she—and breathless, moreover; but she managed to do as she was bid. She got rather wet in getting ashore; for Ronald was not there to help her; but she had no time to mind that; she made her way as rapidly as she could along the bank, and there was Ronald awaiting her, with a quiet smile on his face.

‘This is better work,’ said he placidly, as he gave her the rod.

She was anxious no longer; she was triumphant. Ronald was with her; of course she would get this one also. And who but Ronald would have brought such a stroke of luck to the boat?

‘I would get in some of the line now,’ said he, calmly. ‘I have been letting him do as he liked; and he is a long way out. And mind, you’ll have to watch him; he is quite fresh; there has been no fighting at all yet.’

‘Oh, Ronald,’ she said, with the pretty pale face grown quite rosy with the excitement and the hard work, ‘won’t it be just too splendid for anything if we can get them both?’

'I hope ye may,' he said, 'for it's not likely to happen again in your life-time.'

The fish now began to rebel against the new strain that was being put on him, and indulged in a variety of wild cantrips—apparently at a considerable distance out. By this time the other boat was also ashore, and Miss Carry's father came along to see how Ronald's pupil could play a salmon. Just as he drew near, there was a pretty lively scrimmage going on.

'Why, you want to have them all,' he complained. 'It is not fair sport to bag a brace of salmon right and left.'

She did not answer—in fact, she could not ; she had enough to do. For now the salmon seemed wanting to get right out to the middle of the lake ; and the length of line that lay between her and her enemy dragged heavily on her arms. And then he altered his tactics—coming rapidly to the surface and trying to break the suddenly slackened line by furious lashings of his tail. But all this was in vain ; and now, as he seemed yielding a little, she put a heavier strain on him, and began to reel up. It was very well done ; and without a word of admonition ; for Ronald was proud of his pupil, and wished to show that he could leave her to herself.

By-and-by the fish began to show himself a little more amenable, and preparations were made for receiving him on shore. Miss Carry stepped back a few yards ; her father got out of the way altogether ; Ronald crouched down, clip in hand. Of course, when the salmon found himself being guided into the shallows, he was off like a bolt ; and again and again he repeated these sullen rushes ; but each time they were growing weaker ; and at last, as the gleam of something white showed in the water, Ronald made a sudden plunge with the clip—and the salmon was ashore.

He laughed lightly.

'I suppose this will be my last day on the loch—and a very good finish it is.'

The men brought along the other fish, and these were all laid out on the grass side by side, though it was now too dark to see much of them. As regards the three salmon, Mr. Hodson's, on being accurately weighed, was found to be $16\frac{1}{2}$ lbs., Miss Carry's two respectively, 14 lbs. and 11 lbs. She was a very happy young woman as she walked home with her father and Ronald through the now rapidly gathering dusk.

His last day on the lake:—well, it would be something

pleasant to look back upon in after times—the summer-like weather, the still water, the silent and sunlit crags and woods and bays. And perhaps, too, he would remember something of her bright society, her friendly disposition, and the frank good-comradeship with which she shared her meal of milk and bread with two common boatmen. Nay, he could not well help remembering that—and with a touch of gratitude and kindness, too—even though they should never meet again through the long years of life.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PARTING.

Now amid all his preparations for departure nothing distressed him so much as the difficulty he found in trying to write something worthy of being placed in Meenie's book. It was to be his last gift to her; she herself had asked for it; surely he ought to do his best? And perhaps it was this very anxiety that baffled him. Even of such small lyrical faculty as he possessed, he was in no sense the master. He could write easily enough at the instigation of some passing fancy; but the fancy had to come uncalled-for; it was not of his summoning. And now, in this hour of direst need, no kindly Ariel would come to help him. Walking across the lonely moors, with the dogs for his sole companions, or lying on a far hill-side, and tearing twigs of heather with his teeth, he worried his brain for a subject, and all to no purpose. Perhaps, if praise of Meenie had been permissible—if he could have dared to write anything about herself in her own book—he might have found the task more easy; for that was the one direction in which his imagination was always facile enough. One morning, indeed, when he was coming down the Clebrig slopes, he saw Miss Carry and Meenie walking together along the road; and he had not much difficulty in shaping out some such verses as these—jingling the rhymes together without much concern about the sense, and then scribbling the result on the back of an envelope to see how it looked:—

*By Mudal's river she idly strayed,
And drank afresh the morning breeze :
Tell me, you beautiful dark-eyed maid,
That's come across the Atlantic seas—*

*See you our winsome Sutherland flower,
Her cheek the tint of the summer rose,
Her gold-brown hair her only dower,
Her soul as white as Ben Clebrig's snows ?*

*Blue as the ruffled loch her eyes,
Sweet her breath as the blossoming heather :
O do you think the whole world's skies
Can see aught fairer than you together ?*

*Sisters twain—one slender and dark,
Her cheek faint-tanned by the tropic south ;
One northern-bred, her voice like a lark,
The joy of the hills in her gladsome youth.*

*Ben Clebrig shall judge—nay, shall keep the two,
And bind them in chains of love for ever ;
Look to it, Clebrig ; guard them true :
Sisters twain—and why should they sever ?*

But even here there was a false note; and he knew it. Perhaps he was vaguely jealous of any alien interference: was not Meenie the sole and only care of the giant mountain? Anyhow, the verses were of no avail for Meenie's book; and otherwise he did not care for them; so the envelope was crumpled up and thrown away.

On the evening before the brother and sister were to leave for the South, Meenie came along to see them. Ronald had got quite accustomed to find Miss Douglas in the house of late; for Maggie needed a good deal of direction and help—the tearful little lass being sorely distraught at the thought of going away. But on this occasion it was himself she had come to seek.

‘I have made a little drawing for you, Ronald,’ said she—and the beautiful Highland eyes were downcast a little—‘as well as I could, of the loch and the hills and the river; and I want you to take it to Glasgow with you, and put it on the mantelpiece of your room, and then sometimes it will make you think of the old place and of us all.’

‘I’m sure it will not need a picture to make me do that,’ said he, ‘but all the same I am obliged to ye—and it will be the chief treasure in the house—’

‘Oh, no—oh, no,’ she said, with a rueful smile—and she ventured to raise her eyes. ‘You must not think it a picture at

all—but only a few lines scribbled on a paper-knife to make you remember the place when you happen to find it lying about. And you must not look at it until I have gone; because you would feel bound to praise it; and that would be as awkward for you as for me—for indeed it is nothing at all. And here,’ she added, producing a small slip of paper, ‘is my sister’s address in Glasgow; and I have written to her; and she will be very glad if you will call on them when you have the time.’

‘I don’t know how to thank ye,’ said he. ‘It’s when people are going away that they find out how many friends they are leaving behind.’

‘In your case,’ said she, very modestly and prettily, ‘it is not difficult to count—you have only to say the whole country-side.’ And then she added: ‘I heard of the lads that came all the way from Tongue.’

‘The wild fellows!—they had a long tramp here and back home again.’

She looked at him rather hesitatingly.

‘There will be a great many coming to see you off to-morrow morning, Ronald,’ she said.

‘I should think not—I should think not,’ he said.

‘Oh, but I know there will be. Every one is talking of it. And I was thinking—if it was not too much trouble—if you were not too busy—I was wondering if you would come along and say good-bye to my father and mother this evening—I would rather have that than—than—with a crowd of people standing by—’

‘Oh, yes, certainly,’ he said, at once. ‘When will I come? Now, if ye like.’

‘And Maggie, too?’

‘Yes, yes, why not?’

‘And about my album, Ronald?’

‘Well,’ said he, with not a little embarrassment, ‘I have not written anything in it yet; but I will give it to you in the morning; and—and if there’s nothing in it, then ye must just understand that I could not get anything good enough, and I will send something from Glasgow—’

‘Indeed no,’ said she, promptly. ‘Why should you trouble about a thing like that? Write your name in the book, Ronald, and that will be enough.’

The three of them now went outside, and the door was shut behind them. It was a beautiful night; the moon was slowly rising over the solitudes of Strath Terry; and the lake was like a

sheet of silver. They were rather silent as they walked along the grey highway ; to-morrow was to make a difference to all of their lives.

When they reached the doctor's cottage, and when Ronald and Maggie were ushered into the parlour, it was clear that the visit had been expected ; for there was cake on the table, and there were plates and knives, and a decanter of sherry, and a number of wine-glasses. And not only was the big good-humoured doctor as friendly as ever, but even the awe-inspiring little Dresden-china lady condescended, in these unusual circumstances, to be gracious. Of course the talk was all about Ronald's going away, and his prospects in Glasgow, and so forth ; and Mrs. Douglas took care to impress him with the fact that, on the occasion of Lord Ailine having recently spent an evening with them, his lordship had distinctly approved of the step Ronald had taken, and hoped it might turn out well in every way.

‘ Will there be any office-work, Ronald ? ’ the doctor asked.

‘ I suppose so, for a time.’

‘ You’ll not like that, my lad.’

‘ I’ll have to take what comes, like other folk,’ was the simple answer.

How pretty Meenie was on this last evening ! She did not say much ; and she hardly ever looked at him ; but her presence, then as ever, seemed to bring with it an atmosphere of gentleness and sweetness ; and when, by chance, she did happen to regard him, there was a kind of magic wonder in her eyes that for the moment rather bedazzled him and made his answers to these good people’s inquiries somewhat inconsecutive. For they were curious to know about his plans and schemes ; and showed much interest in his welfare ; while all the time he sate thinking of how strange Glasgow would be without the chance of catching a glimpse of Meenie anywhere ; and wondering whether his dream-sweetheart—the imaginary Meenie whom he courted and wooed and won in these idle verses of his—would be nearer to him there, or would fade gradually away and finally disappear.

‘ In any case, Ronald,’ said Mrs. Douglas—and she thus addressed him for the first time, ‘ you have a good friend in his lordship.’

‘ I know that.’

‘ I suppose I am breaking no confidence,’ continued the little dame, in her grand way, ‘ in saying that he plainly intimated to us his willingness, supposing that you were not as successful as

we all hope you may be—I say, his lordship plainly intimated to us that he would always have a place open for you somewhere.'

'Yes, I think he would do that,' Ronald said; 'but when a man has once put his hand to the plough, he must not go back.'

And perhaps, for one feeble moment of indecision, he asked himself what had ever tempted him to put his hand to the plough—and to go away from this quiet security, and friendliness, and peace. But it was only for a moment. Of course, all that had been argued out before. The step had been taken; forwards, and not backwards, he must go. Still, to be sitting in this quiet little room—with the strange consciousness that Meenie was so near—watching the nimble, small fingers busy with her knitting—and wondering when she would raise those beautiful, deep, tender, clear eyes; and to think that on the morrow hour after hour would be placing a greater and greater distance between him and the possibility of any such another evening—nay, that it was not only miles but years, and perhaps a whole lifetime, that he was placing between her and him—that was no joyful kind of a fancy. If it had been Meenie who was going away, that would have been easier to bear.

*'Call her back, Clebrig; Mudal, call;
Ere all of the young springtime be flown.'*

he would have cried to hill and river and loch and glen, knowing that sooner or later Love Meenie would come back from Glasgow Town. But his own going away was very different—and perhaps a final thing.

By-and-by he rose, and begged to be excused. Maggie might stay for a while longer with Miss Douglas, if she liked; as for him, he had some matters to attend to. And so they bade him good-bye, and wished him well, and hoped to hear all good things of him. Thus they parted; and he went out by himself into the clear moonlight night.

But he did not go home. A strange unrest and longing had seized him; a desire to be alone with the silence of the night; perhaps some angry impatience that he could not make out so much as a few trivial verses for this beautiful girl-friend whom he might never see again. He could write about his dream-sweetheart easily enough; and was there to be never a word for Meenie herself? So he walked down to the river; and wandered along the winding and marshy banks—startling many wildfowl the while—until he reached the lake. There he launched one of the cobles; and pulled out to the middle of the still sheet of

water ; and took the oars in again. By this time the redshank and curlews and plover had quieted down once more ; there was a deadly stillness all around ; and he had persuaded himself that he had only come to have a last look at the hills and the loch and the moorland wastes that Meenie had made magical for him in the years now left behind ; and to bid farewell to these ; and carry away in his memory a beautiful picture of them.

It was a lonely and a silent world. There was not a sound save the distant murmur of a stream ; no breath of wind came down from the Clebrig slopes to ruffle the broad silver sweeps of moonlight on the water ; the tiny hamlet half hidden among the trees gave no sign of life. The cottage he had left—the white front of it now palely clear in the distance—seemed a ghostly thing : a small, solitary, forsaken thing, in the midst of this vast amphitheatre of hills that stood in awful commune with the stars. On such a night the wide and vacant spaces can readily become peopled ; phantoms issue from the shadows of the woods and grow white in the open ; an unknown wind may arise, bringing with it strange singing from the northern seas. And if he forgot the immediate purpose of the verses that he wanted ; if he forgot that he must not mention the name of Meenie ; if he saw only the little cottage, and the moonlit loch, and the giant bulk of Clebrig that was keeping guard over the sleeping hamlet, and watching that no sprites or spectres should work their evil charms within reach of Meenie's half-listening ear—well, it was all a fire in his blood and his brain, and he could not stay to consider. The phantom-world was revealed ; the silence now was filled as with a cry from the lone seas of the far north ; and, all impatient, and eager, and half bewildered, he seemed to press forward to seize those visions and that weird music ere both should vanish and be mute.—

*The moonlight lies on Loch Naver,
And the night is strange and still ;
And the stars are twinkling coldly
Above the Clebrig hill.*

*And there by the side of the water,
O what strange shapes are these ?
O these are the wild witch-maidens
Down from the northern seas.*

*And they stand in a magic circle,
Pale in the moonlight sheen ;
And each has over her forehead
A star of golden-green.*

WHITE HEATHER.

*O what is their song?—of sailors
That never again shall sail;
And the music sounds like the sobbing
And sighing that brings a gale.*

*But who is she who comes yonder?—
And all in white is she;
And her eyes are open, but nothing
Of the outward world can she see.*

*O haste you back, Meenie, haste you,
And haste to your bed again;
For these are the wild witch-maidens
Down from the northern main.*

*They open the magic circle;
They draw her into the ring;
They kneel before her, and slowly
A strange, sad song they sing—*

*A strange, sad song—as of sailors
That never again shall sail;
And the music sounds like the sobbing
And sighing that brings a gale.*

*O haste you back, Meenie, haste you,
And haste to your bed again;
For these are the wild witch-maidens
Down from the northern main.*

‘*O come with us, rose-white Meenie,
To our sea-halls draped with green;
O come with us, rose-white Meenie,
And be our rose-white queen!*

‘*And you shall have robes of splendour,
With shells and pearls bestrewn;
And a sceptre olden and golden,
And a rose-white coral throne.*

‘*And by day you will hear the music
Of the ocean come nigher and nigher;
And by night you will see your palace
Ablaze with phosphor fire.*

‘*O come with us, rose-white Meenie,
To our sea-halls draped with green;
O come with us, rose-white Meenie,
And be our rose-white queen!*’

*But Clebrig heard ; and the thunder
Down from his iron hand sped ;
And the band of the wild witch-maidens
One swift shriek uttered, and fled.*

*And Meenie awoke, and terror
And wonder were in her eyes ;
And she looked at the moon-white valley,
And she looked to the star-lit skies.*

*O haste you back, Meenie, haste you,
And haste to your bed again ;
For these are the wild witch-maidens
Down from the northern main.*

*O hear you not yet their singing
Come faintly back on the breeze ?—
The song of the wild witch-sisters
As they fly to the Iceland seas.*

*O hark—tis a sound like the sobbing
And sighing that brings a gale :
A low, sad song—as of sailors
That never again shall sail !*

Slowly he pulled in to the shore again, and fastened up the boat ; and slowly he walked away through the silent and moonlit landscape, revolving these verses in his mind, but not trying in the least to estimate their value, supposing them to have any at all. Even when he had got home, and in the stillness of his own room—for by this time Maggie had gone to bed—was writing out the lines, with apparent ease enough, on a large sheet of paper, it was with no kind of critical doubt or anxiety. He could not have written them otherwise ; probably he knew he was not likely to make them any better by over-refining them. And the reason why he put them down on the large sheet of paper was that Meenie's name occurred in them ; and she might not like that familiarity to appear in her album ; he would fold the sheet of paper, and place it in the book, and she could let it remain there, or burn it, as she chose. And then he went and had his supper, which Maggie had left warm by the fire, and thereafter lit a pipe—or rather two or three pipes, as it befel, for this was the last night before his leaving Inver-Mudal, and there were many dreams and reveries (and even fantastic possibilities) to be dismissed for ever.

The next morning, of course, there was no time or room for

poetic fancies. When he had got Maggie to take along the little book to the doctor's cottage, he set about making his final preparations, and here he was assisted by his successor, one Peter Munro. Finally he went to say good-bye to the dogs.

'Good-bye, doggies, good-bye,' said he, as they came bounding to the front of the kennel, pawing at him through the wooden bars, and barking and whining, and trying to lick his hand. 'Good-bye, Bess! Good-bye, Lugar—lad, lad, we've had many a day on the hill together.'

And then he turned sharply to his companion.

'Ye'll not forget what I told you about that dog, Peter?'

'I will not,' said the other.

'If I thought the dog was not to be looked after, I would get out my rifle this very minute and put a bullet through his head—though it would cost me 7*l.* Mind what I've told ye now; if he's not fed separate, he'll starve; he's that gentle and shy that he'll not go near the trough when the others are feeding. And a single cross word on the hill will spoil him for the day—mind you tell any strange gentlemen that come up with his lordship—some o' them keep roaring at dogs as if they were bull-calves. There's not a better setter in the county of Sutherland than that old Lugar—but he wants civil treatment.'

'I'll look after him, never fear, Ronald,' his companion said. 'And now come away, man. Ye've seen to everything; and the mail-gig will be here in half an hour.'

Ronald was still patting the dogs' heads, and talking to them—he seemed loth to leave them.

'Come away, man,' his companion urged. 'All the lads are at the inn; and they want to have a parting glass with you. Your sister and every one is there; and everything is ready.'

'Very well,' said he, and he turned away rather moodily.

But when they were descended from the little plateau into the highway he saw that Meenie Douglas was coming along the road—and rather quickly; and for a minute he hesitated, lest she should have some message for him.

'Oh, Ronald,' she said, and he hardly noticed that her face was rather pale and anxious, 'I wanted to thank you—I could not let you go away without thanking you—it—it is so beautiful—'

'I should beg your pardon,' said he, with his eyes cast down, 'for making use of your short name—'

'But, Ronald,' she said, very bravely (though after a moment's hesitation, as if she had to nerve herself), 'whenever you think of

any of us here, I hope you will think of me by that name always—and now, good-bye !'

He lifted his eyes to hers for but a second—for but a second only, and yet, perhaps, with some sudden and unforeseen and farewell message on his part, and on hers some swift and not over-glad guessing.

' Good-bye ! '

They shook hands in silence ; and then she turned and went away ; and he rejoined his companion and they went on together. But Meenie did not re-enter the cottage. She stole away down to the river, and lingered by the bridge, listening. For there were faint sounds audible in the still morning air.

The mail-cart from the north came rattling along, and crossed the bridge, and went on towards the inn, and again there was silence, but for these faint sounds. And now she could make out the thin echoes of the pipes—no doubt one of the young lads was playing—'*Lochiel's away to France*,' perhaps, or '*A Thousand Blessings*,' for surely no one, on such an occasion, would think of *Macrimmon's Lament*—

*' Macrimmon shall no more return
Oh ! never, never more return !'*

It would be something joyous they were playing there to speed him on his way ; and the 'drink at the door'—the *Deoch an Dhoruis*—would be going the round ; and many would be the hand-shaking and farewell. And then, by-and-by, as she sate there all alone and listening, she heard a faint sound of cheering—and that was repeated, in a straggling sort of fashion ; and thereafter there was silence. The mail-cart had driven away for the south.

Nor even now did she go back to the cottage. She wandered away through the wild moorland wastes—hour after hour, and aimlessly ; and when, by chance, a shepherd or crofter came along the road, she left the highway and went aside among the heather, pretending to seek for wild-flowers or the like : for sometimes, if not always, there was that in the beautiful, tender Highland eyes which she would have no stranger see.

(To be continued.)

A Pathan Brigand.

A VERY small incident of our march on Candahar in 1879 was the rout of Lazar Khan, a brigand who haunted the Kojak road. So small it was, indeed, that I have not found the name of that gallant doctor who charged beside Lieut. Wells, R.E., and abreast with him leapt the nullah filled to the edge with desperadoes. But the smart little fray was fixed in our recollection by unfriendly inquiries from India, suggesting blame to follow. In drawing up his reply Colonel St. John, Political Agent at Candahar, found support unlooked for. The guilds of the town sent him a deputation to thank General Stewart for ridding the country of a scoundrel who had harassed their trade for twenty years. I chanced to be calling at the Arx when these dignitaries arrived. After delivering the message of their companies, they sat awhile, gossiping in a grave way about Lazar Khan, his character and his story.

This outlaw was nephew to the late Khan of Lalpoora; cousin, therefore, to the lady who was Shere Ali's favourite wife, the mother of Yakoob Khan. The children were attached, and when Lazar outgrew the age for admittance to the chief's harem, they still met; for his mother, a widow, had hopes and projects. The girl's horoscope announced that her husband would be a very great prince, but the wording of this prophecy bore two interpretations. The Khan read it to mean that a great prince would seek his daughter, but his sister-in-law understood that the young lady's husband, whoever he might be, would become a great prince; and she saw no cause or impediment to forbid that Lazar should be that happy man. No boy in Lalpoora was so strong, none more shrewd, firm, and masterful. By every means she encouraged the childish liking, to establish, if possible, such relations that her niece would not willingly accept another bridegroom when she reached marriageable years. An Afghan girl is not helpless in this matter.

When of age to carry arms Lazar enlisted in the Khan of

Khelat's bodyguard—a rough and ready force of Pathans, then, as now, a favourite service for bold and restless mountaineers. Like the Scotch archers of Louis XI., they obey the prince, neither asking nor answering questions so long as their hire is paid. That is a good school of arms for its class, but those who graduate there, if not robbers and cut-throats when they enlist, learn worse practices in that scheming, faithless, Borgian court. Lazar's first campaign was the great Brahui invasion. He had some share in provoking that war. One day the Khan ordered his hounds and falcons to be paraded. Among the feudatories in attendance was the chief of the Bolan Brahuis, Allaoddina, a gigantic Khurd. Sitting in the big window of the durbar hall they talked of sport and bragged. Allaoddina capped the best stories by declaring that in his country was preserved a pair of wild-sheep horns through which a man could creep without touching earth with his knees. Lazar, standing there on guard, laughed out. The fiery Khurd started to his feet, vowing he would not be insulted by a Pathan dog. The Khan put his soldier under arrest, but he declared with warmth that if men told silly lies they should expect to be laughed at. Allaoddina controlled himself and offered a bet—his whole pack of hounds against three couple of the Khan's. A round wager was that in money value, but graver still by reason of the pride and jealousy with which these people cherish their dogs. Two Belooch nobles were sent into the Bolan country, and they decided the bet in Allaoddina's favour. The Khan swore that they were liars also, and refused to pay. Allaoddina fled from Khelat that night, and raised his clan. An outbreak was prevented by the English Resident, and the Khan discharged his wager; but on the first opportunity he gave his foe an insufficient dose of poison. Allaoddina escaped again, and both parties prepared for war. The Brahuis poured down from their hills, met the enemy at Dadur and routed them. The Pathan bodyguard, bravely standing, suffered heavily, and Lazar won a commission. At Mustang the Khan fought again, and suffered utter defeat, but Lazar again distinguished himself. By threats of British interposition the victors were stayed and negotiations opened. Lazar now commanded the bodyguard. When peace was made he took furlough, and entered his mother's dwelling unannounced. The courtyard and the lower chamber were empty. He ran up the broken narrow staircase.

A young girl sat upon the floor playing with a dog, which sprang on the intruder yelping welcome. The damsel looked up

and laughed, and put on her veil so leisurely that Lazar had ample time for admiration. 'Surely this is little Nuradeh,' he exclaimed, 'grown into a lovely girl?'

'What pretty manners they teach in Khelat. No one ever said that to me before.'

Youths and maidens speak right out in Afghanistan when they catch a rare opportunity. Lazar replied, 'Very soon you will have somebody who will repeat it all day long. I wish I were he!'

'If you go on I'll tell my sister.'

'Never mind your sister just now. I swear by the Prophet, Nuradeh, you are the prettiest creature in Lalpoora!'

'What a sinful Khelati you have grown! I see your mother crossing the yard. Tell her if you dare!'

'Is the shed still standing by the Khan's garden wall?'

'Yes.'

'I shall be there to-night.'

'I'll give the message. But you must not keep her waiting in the cold.'

'Her? Whom?'

'My sister, of course!'

'Oh, a blessing on your sister! It is you I love with all my heart.' With all my liver and inside, Lazar put it, and of two absurd phrases his is possibly the less unmeaning.

The mother interrupted. Had she looked for the visit, that stern old dame would have kept her feelings under rigid guard, but joyful surprise mastered stoicism. She fell on Lazar's neck, and cried thanks to Heaven, and held him out to admire, and laughed over him. Probably the young man was handsome. His tribe is not often fair, though grey eyes and flaxen beards are found among them. A giant he was certainly, big-limbed and tall, with a mane of hair gathered under his turban and escaping in loose tresses, eyes large, generally frowning, and features prominent, though fleshy—a type of his ruthless, cunning, resolute people. The anomalies of their character have puzzled most observers. I think that traits such as chivalry, devotion in love, generosity, and keen sense of honour may all be reconciled with the practice of murder and theft under a system of ethics that calls them criminal but does not admit them mean.

Nuradeh watched the meeting with curiosity, and laughed out behind her sheet-like veil. When the mother recovered herself she put her son in the place of honour, for henceforth there was

again a sword-bearer in the household. Lazar recounted the campaign, which, by his report, all turned on his own skill and heroism. I am trying in this story to suggest, where circumstances allow, the character of the Pathan in general. A habit of grave but reckless boasting is not to be omitted.

Nuradeh went away at length. Her black eyes danced maliciously through the loop-holes of the veil as Lazar silently renewed his prayers for a word in the garden that night. When she had left him the dame spoke freely, insisting that the Khan would not refuse his daughter to a cadet of the family who had won such early distinction as promised in no long time to fulfil the horoscope. But Lazar judged more soundly, aided by a newborn passion for Nuradeh. The Khan of Lalpoora is one of the first nobles of Afghanistan, and his eldest daughter's beauty was already famed. If in good humour he might laugh at his proposal, but his after-mood would be rage.

All the young men of the town came to welcome their comrade returned with glory. The Khan himself sent a gracious message, and asked Lazar to supper, when the hero of the feast told his tale over again, with further embellishments. At nightfall he slipped away, found the dilapidated shed, and whispered through a crack of the garden wall, used long since by the children for their little confidences. Lazar did not dare to breathe a name, lest Nuradeh should really have sent her sister; and as the biting cold numbed his limbs a sense of his ridiculous position was fast changing love to ill-temper.

‘I came to tell you,’ he growled at length, ‘that Lazar means to keep guard over this place. So you had better warn your lovers!’

‘Oh, mercy! Lalpoora will be depopulated, and we shall all die maidens!’

‘Oh no! For when I have eaten my rivals, I will marry you. Why have you not answered all this time, mischievous girl?’

‘How could I imagine you were talking to me? It was alarm made me speak. Spare my lovers, kind cousin!’

‘I will—to spite them——’

That’s a promise! Now I shall sleep easy. Let me advise you to go to bed when you feel chilly. Good night!’

‘At this same hour to-morrow—— Will you be here?’ But he only heard a faint laugh.

Quite seriously now Lazar was in love, and eager to marry. But the chances looked ill on every side. Nuradeh was the off-

spring of a Shiaposh slave, as her slender form and the faint colour of her cheeks declared ; but she ranked, as yet, on an equal footing with those daughters of the chief whose birth, noble on both sides, gave them a claim to great political alliances. The Khan would not give her to a bridegroom who had neither influence nor wealth. In such cases also a young man's female relatives negotiate, and Lazar dared not propose Nuradeh to his mother. He waited for events, and meantime the pair met each evening. It is probable that a reckless young man and a girl so bold in her self-confidence were not long separated by a wall, but nothing came of their interviews. When Lazar pressed her too warmly to overcome their difficulties by flight, Nuradeh laughed and ran away. With sentries overlooking the garden, and a score of swashbucklers in call, she was always mistress of the situation. Nothing had been settled when the furlough expired.

During this time Lazar met the eldest daughter twice or thrice, impenetrably veiled of course. Grown up now, sixteen years old, that is, she understood quite well his mother's schemes, and accepted half of them. It was quite proper and fitting that a young man should be over head and ears in love, but if her own feelings responded she kept them within control. Nuradeh declared that she was jealous of him, but that proves nothing. The woman who resents the transfer of a love she does not return is no peculiar product of civilisation.

Lazar went back to his service, hot with disappointed passion. After a time the Momund Khan fell under suspicion of the Ameer, who summoned him to Cabul. His defence was not frankly admitted, and Shere Ali demanded hostages. The Khan recollects his daughter's horoscope, and suggested delicately, through confidential channels, that the weightiest hostage he could give was the handsomest girl in the country. The Ameer took this bait, and in a few days the wedding came off. When Lazar's mother heard of it she was distraught, and in her passion uttered many foolish sayings which reached Shere Ali. The Khan had not miscalculated his daughter's influence, which from the first roused bitter jealousies. The malevolent made what they could of this scandal, but it produced no visible result.

As soon as Lazar heard of the marriage he resigned his post at Khelat and hurried to Cabul, eager to profit by his cousin's elevation. The Ameer had already given him a regiment of cavalry when the gossip mentioned came to his royal ear. No

one breathed a word of it to Lazar, who thought himself launched upon the tide of fortune. Under such circumstances it was no presumption to ask Nuradeh's hand, but to make sure, he tried to interest the princess in his suit through one of their many relatives about her. The consequence was disconcerting. One morning in durbar the Ameer spoke roughly, without cause apparent, and on the Colonel's spirited reply—for discipline and loyal respect are qualified in that service—he was put under arrest. Set free after a month's confinement, he had an opportunity, if he chose to use it, of witnessing Nuradeh's betrothal with the heir of the Governor of Badakhshan. I need not dwell upon his feelings. Before the marriage was consummated, his rival, a sickly youth, died, and Nuradeh became a maiden-widow. She retired with her father to Lalpoora, and the possibilities of romance reopened.

Wars have taught us much geography of late, but such cramming does not dwell in the recollection. It may be advisable to recall that the capital of the fierce and faithless Momunds is commanded by the great fort of Dacca, where a strong garrison is always maintained by the Ameer. This threatening surveillance was naturally resented by the Khan of Lalpoora, and so soon as he felt confidence in his daughter's fascination, he asked for the Civil Governorship of Dacca. It was granted, and the Khan took up his quarters in the fort. This was a blow for Lazar. Great dangers he would have found in opening effective communication with Nuradeh in the old house, now that his feelings towards her were published, but it was no less than impossible to hang about the Governor's dwelling, situated in the middle of a fortress, most vigilantly guarded by some thousands of shrewd, quick-eyed mountaineers. Examining the situation steadily, Lazar saw but one resource. By the luckiest of accidents he had not yet shaved his beard, reserving that formality until his uniform was made. He rode out to a village many miles from Cabul, and got rid of it; made what further changes he could in his appearance, bought some common clothes, and repaired to Dacca. There he enlisted as a private.

The fortress stands upon a flat beside the Cabul river; its mud walls, immensely thick and high, enclose several acres. A second wall, pierced by a single gate, divides the cavalry parade-ground from that of the infantry. Upon the south side of the latter stand isolated bungalows of the Commandant and superior officers; beyond them, in the same line, run regimental officers' quarters, the furthest of which nearly abut on the Civil Com-

mandant's house and garden. These cover a large space on either flank of the military road, and they stretch, in broken outline, almost to the Lalpoora Gate. When the conditions of Afghan life are recalled—upon the one hand universal treachery, upon the other an exaggerated respect for female privacy—it will be seen that the Civil Governor of Dacca occupies a point in the fortress which almost lays it in his power if he be disloyal. Officers and battalions of tried fidelity are posted round his quarters.

In one of these Lazar enlisted. He lounged by day and slept by night within touch of the garden wall. Chiefs and slaves and retainers whom he knew passed constantly, but he might as well have remained outside. Though vigilance was relaxed when a Governor of such guaranteed loyalty took possession, officers maintained the usual discipline. No soldier was allowed to speak with any of the household, nor to approach the wall at night. A line of sentries guarded it so closely that no one could pass, and they even watched each other. Those doing duty on the fortifications, which, of course, overlooked both house and garden, were enjoined to keep their backs turned. In short, the regulations cut off every opportunity of communication or spying.

In a few hours Lazar discovered this state of things, and set himself to master it. He made the most of his military knowledge and his education, professing to have served in a British regiment, as have thousands of his people. Within a month he was appointed naik, a grade which brought him under notice of the officers, and shortly won him further advancement. As havildar he could move about more freely, and the heat gave him an excuse for haunting the ramparts after nightfall. Summer was now at its hottest period, a season as terrible, and almost as dreary, as the Arctic winter of those parts. The marshes lay ankle-deep in dust. The trees of the garden daily drooped and withered, to recover nightly, when the sluice-gates opened. No one who could help it stirred from quarters until evening, when, after a brief parade, the fort glimmered with a thousand little lamps, round which, in the hot dust, the soldiers lay telling stories, singing, gambling, listening to the bagpipes. At the same time the Governor's house lit up, and a shrouded glow rose above the foliage of the garden. Long after the main building lay in darkness, lights shone in one spot. Lazar inquired cautiously of those who had seen the place in winter, and he learned that thereabouts stood a kiosk, hidden now by the leaves. It was evident to him that the ladies assembled there at evening, as is a common practice,

and that all of them did not withdraw to sleep, since, on dark nights, a very feeble radiance gleamed till morning. He had the advantage of knowing the Khan's household, and reckoning it over with such care as the stake of life impresses on a computation, he judged that his mistress slept at the kiosk, on the roof no doubt, with two or three female slaves, and possibly a little sister.

But to communicate with her still made a problem so bewildering that Lazar ceased to think of the result till it was mastered. Time brought no solution, nor any chance he dared to use. There was always movement about the Khan's quarters, and amongst the younger Momunds Lazar recognised several whom he would have sounded cautiously had it been possible to do so; carriers also, povindahs and gipsies, ready for a treacherous service well-paid, if it lay outside their contract, often passed with loads. But he could not approach them unobserved. At length, urged by despairing passion, Lazar resolved a scheme as reckless as criminal. One slave of the Khan's was a very big old woman, deformed in her legs. She constantly passed the Lalpoora Gate alone, and returned, by special permit, after dark. It was her habit, when thus belated, to enter the Governor's house by the garden, letting herself in with a mighty key. Lazar determined to waylay this poor creature outside, take her clothes and key and pass, throw the body into the stream, and re-enter the fort in disguise. No one would speak to him, the slave's rolling walk was easy to imitate, her trousers and long veil would hide his uniform, the key would give him admittance to the garden, and then—as it pleased Allah. If nothing came of it the first time, he would always hold a means of reaching the kiosk, when he chose to risk it, with a better knowledge of the circumstances. Murder revolted him no way. More satisfactory it would have been, no doubt, had the person to be disposed of been a male, but the decree of Providence was otherwise. Lazar thought out carefully the chances of being detected by women in the garden, by soldiers in quitting it, or in slipping off his disguise before returning to quarters; considered in every point the hue-and-cry that would be raised when a trusty servant vanished within the fort, since the gate-guard would certify her return and the sentries would have seen her enter and quit the garden—revolved these great dangers and difficulties; thought out a hiding-place for the clothes and the key that would not be discovered in the most minute search. I do not dwell on these matters, because the plan was changed in some degree. He waited for a moonless night,

when the slave should go forth at such an hour as would ensure a late return. Then he asked leave for the day, and strolled across the dusty, burning flat towards the ford that lies between Dacca and Lalpoora. His victim had an hour's start. But unlooked-for fates protected her that day.

Lazar was not a favourite in his battalion. A number of old soldiers—Waziris for the most part—who welcomed him cordially at first joining, had turned against the havildar since his promotion, and the rest followed their lead. He thought them jealous, and gave little heed to their hostility, absorbed in his own designs. These occupied him wholly as he approached the ford. Within a few inches of its swift current lay a man, his bare head frizzling in the torrid heat, the turban unrolled beside his nerveless hand. That position told a story. The poor fellow had felt the blood boil suddenly to his brain as he waded, had knelt to dip his puggri upon reaching shore, and had fallen as by a death-stroke before he could replace the dripping bandage. Lazar hesitated. Pity is an unknown feeling to his kith, unless there be something grand, emotional, in the disaster. This man was his enemy, but for the same reason it might be worth while to help him. Nothing particular had he to do for hours; so Lazar knelt, raised the senseless body, and dropped it full length in the stream, holding the face above water. In a short time the hardy mountaineer regained his senses and kicked. Lazar drew him out and stretched him on the hot sand; then he lit his bubble-bubble. After a while the patient sat up, and dumbly put out his hand. Lazar did not misapprehend this gesture; he dumbly transferred the pipe.

Words came presently. ‘To God be the thanks! Why have you done this, havildar?’

‘In the praise of God I did it. Why have you hated me, sipahi?’

‘For a good cause. You watch us blameless ones from the morning to the morrow's dawn; we cannot move day or night but you are spying on the walls, at the gate, or in quarters. What is it you suspect?’ The man's pale face and feverish eyes betrayed more anxiety than he knew.

‘When a shepherd sits in ambush waiting for the wolf, do his sheep imagine that their master has bad designs? Then this is the reason you Waziris have been unfriendly! Reassure them, brother, I have never spied on one of you.’

They passed the pipe from hand to hand silently, looking over

the flat to the high walls of their fortress, stealing a glance obliquely in each other's face.

'Our blessed Ameer loves the Khan greatly; it becomes not his soldiers to distrust without cause.'

'God alone is always wise.'

'He is the Merciful One! You believe then, brother, that the Khan has evil projects in gathering so much money?'

Lazar's hawk eyes gleamed; they caught a glimpse of a secret. He said, 'The blessed Ameer is far away; we who eat his bread must keep guard for him. Consider, I pray you, how easily that huge fort might be taken if we were not faithful and vigilant. The Khan and his house, his family, and the enormous treasure you speak of are in our hands. If we slept, brother, evil men might destroy them all silently and escape. When the bugle sounded in the morning and the crime was discovered, they would have six hours' start. It is not wise to tempt men, brave and honest, who know by what injustice, and fraud and cruelty this great sum has been collected. And then you ask why it has been brought together by this means—for what purpose? I know not; but if the Khan means treachery to his Highness, it behoves us to look out, for we should all be the first victims. Therefore, brother, tell our brave honest comrades that I am not their enemy but their friend; that the observations I make continually are in their interest; that I will share their fate, good or ill, if they admit me to confidence.'

'It is well spoken, havildar! I think I will start homewards now. Thanks be to Allah!'

'Praised be His name!'

They meant no profanity nor hypocrisy. Between two invocations of the Merciful God they had come to an understanding, the purport of which was robbery and murder. But He had nothing to do with that. In all sincerity they gave to Heaven its due, and managed their earthly concerns independently. Like brothers the pair returned, for Lazar had a new idea, and the slave passed unmolested.

That evening he saw a change in the feeling of his battalion. When the lamps shone at nightfall, one after another of the leading spirits came up with a grim, friendly smile. The two Waziri sergeants asked him to sit with them, and time passed merrily; but nothing was hinted of the project Lazar thought to be afoot. A month passed; then cautiously he sounded the man whose life he had saved, and cautiously it was answered that no one knew

him ; that he kept his own secrets so closely, others were tempted to follow his example. Lazar expected this charge. Under solemnest oaths he told his name and rank, and so much as he thought proper of his story. In a few days this confidence worked. But the plot turned out to be a formless thing, of which the end alone was distinctly shaped. Lazar took it in hand and fixed the hour. No blood should be spilt in the Governor's dwelling ; but mutiny of a battalion exacts the death of certain comrades who cannot be trusted. If the Ameer were not roused to desperate measures, individuals had a fair chance of escape.

For success in his private schemes Lazar needed a confederate outside the walls ; and he feared his mother might have left Lalpoora, not hearing of him for such a time. He exaggerated the maternal anxiety of a Pathan dame. She was found at her house, tranquilly expecting his return, if living, laden with spoils. Even in the joy of meeting she observed her son's uniform, and asked an explanation frowningly. Lazar replied that he was hunting down the Khan in vengeance for his treachery ; that he had persuaded his comrades to rise on the following night. It was the way to earn the fierce old woman's help. Still actuated by revenge alone, Lazar proposed to carry off Nuradeh, after sacking her father's house. This also was approved, but without enthusiasm. The mother promised to do all that was asked—to devote her means, to abandon her home. She would have given life for the holy joy of vengeance. Before Lazar returned to quarters, all was ready.

On the following night, when the soldiers lounged in that dusty space between their caverns and the Governor's precincts, the doomed slave passed through them as usual, and stood a moment. She was seen no more. Soon afterwards, the lights in the garden paled, and those in the dwelling were extinguished. Disguised as the slave, Lazar entered. His first step was to seek the door communicating with the house, and to assure himself it was unlocked. Then, cautiously and slowly, his sight and hearing strained, a dagger in his grip, he stole towards the kiosk, from which a faint radiance glimmered among the trees. It proved to be a platform, raised several steps, with a balustrade round, and a roof supported by columns. But it was not flat—nobody could sleep there. In fact, by a lamp's smoky glow he saw mosquito curtains spread on the platform. Lazar crept round, looked at them from every point. They were three, and which might be Nuradeh's, if she were there, he had no means of telling. If this

were not ascertained, her life hung upon a chance. Lazar crawled up the steps, and laid himself along, on the dark side of one curtain. Not the faintest sound could be heard within it; he lifted the edge—the mat lay empty. But the breathing of sleepers reached his ear on either side. A new thought struck him. Moving softly as a snake, he reached the lamp, and then, trusting to his disguise, his wit, and the drowsiness of girls awakened gently, bent over it and pulled the wick backwards till its flame hardly kept alive. Then he stole down the steps, and on the ground beneath raised a long howl. With a cry the girls awoke, and each put out her head.

‘Ho, Kaziah!’ exclaimed a voice that made the listener’s blood thrill. ‘The lamp is nearly out, and one of you careless girls has let a dog enter the garden! Light the lamp instantly, and turn out that unclean beast!’

Lazar stayed to note the curtain from which a slave issued grumbling, and hastened off noiselessly.

It was past two o’clock when he rejoined his associates. Grand rounds had gone by, and in that garrison officers turned in immediately after. The Lalpoora gate was held by the conspirators, and when Lazar visited it he found them ready for their part—to silence the few comrades who were not allies, to pass their friends through after the crime, and to follow; or, if the affair miscarried, to defend the gate like heroes against their confederates. Quietly the main body mustered, each knowing his *rôle* and dauntless to fear or pity. Some were familiar with the house, having worked there as carpenters, and moulderers, and tailors. Twenty picked men Lazar conducted to the door, and left them, waiting a signal; with three others he led the way to the kiosk, where all was still. One remained below, two crawled to the slave’s curtain, and Lazar himself lay down outside Nuradeh’s. By the feeble light the sentinel saw each man’s dagger flash, as he raised it to show himself posted; then, waiting an instant, he barked like a dog. Brief and noiseless was the struggle. The two men rose, holding articles of female dress, which they examined, compared, and stowed away. But Lazar rolled his victim in her curtain, and raised the bundle.

‘What is this, O brother?’ asked one of the others, laughing grimly. ‘If you chance to have killed her, we have no time for burying.’

‘Go into the house and take your share of plunder. I came for vengeance, and I hold it.’

Abduction is no crime to Pathans, even respectable, but it must be done in order. Loyal dealing in an accomplice is jealously exacted by people who have good reason to suspect every move that is not prearranged. These fellow-ruffians were quite ready to quarrel, forgetting in angry distrust both the peril and the plunder. Lazar exclaimed—

‘ You had better look after those who have the money-box, and share my part among you. I am satisfied.’

Grumbling, they hastened to rejoin their comrades in the house, while Lazar made for the gate with his burden. Those standing there eyed him suspiciously and muttered low, but that was no time for questioning. After a feverish wait, the plunderers arrived, heavily laden, and silent; in a mass compact, the battalion filed through with arms shouldered. Not till the ford was reached did these stealthy savages whisper. The only sound of their march was a faint shuffling in the dust.

Nearing the spot where, in darkness, the booty was to be divided, Lazar drew apart. No one noticed, for the gloom of suspicion and greed overshadowed every mind. Further and further he crept away, until darkness swallowed up the mass; then, throwing the prize over his shoulder, he ran beside a water-course. His mother was waiting at the rendezvous, with an old servant and four horses. She mounted and took the girl, laying her across the pommel like a sack; the others went cautiously afoot, leading their beasts. Every inch of that maidan they knew, and it was easy to gain the ford without alarming those other ruffians who snarled and cursed under their voices, sharing the spoil. Then away the little party rode for British soil. Many times during the night they were challenged from a village tower, but as yet the dwellers were all Momund, who knew Lazar. By morning they reached the ‘debateable land,’ where Ghilzais and Shinwarries and Afridis, broken clans all, have small respect for the Ameer, and none for the Lalpoora Khan.

It is the single redeeming trait of all these savages that woman is sacred to them on the high road, or even in a foray under general conditions. Lazar based his welcoming on this chivalry. In the grey of dawn he turned to a clump of trees, and then dismounted, untied the girl, removed her gag, and left her with his mother. Nuradeh was senseless, her features black and swollen. Lazar felt a passionate pity for her, no doubt, but in these operations some inconvenience, some risk must be endured by the woman as by the man.

Whilst attending to the comfort of the horses, and getting out breakfast, he did not fail to visit the sufferer from time to time. Until Nuradeh could sit a horse it would be folly to go on. We might think it absurd and inhuman to expect that a young girl of seventeen could recover her full strength at once after such adventures and such a journey. But Lazar knew his country-women. Cold water and ceaseless brushing, pulling, rubbing of the hair slowly brought Nuradeh round. A moment after opening her eyes she understood the situation ; in half-an-hour Lazar was pleading his excuses. Alone he had carried her off—of course —through thousands of armed men ; and he begged his reward. Nuradeh dropped that point, but she consented to ride ahead with the dame up to the English frontier. Perhaps she recollects that there she would be free. Lazar did not forget it certainly.

After some hours' rest they went further, the ladies in advance. In that part there are no roads ; mountaineers do very well without them, and they would rather bear a little inconvenience than make the way smooth for Cabul oppression or British vengeance. Lazar knew the paths, for in boyhood he had often followed the smuggling caravans. It was a toilsome journey over breakneck hills, through dusky glens full of thorn bush and pista, across swift, treacherous brooks. Few people they met, but Lazar knew that sentries watching from the heights had signalled his passage hours ago. At a point where rocks, steep and towering as the walls of a fortress, left but a few feet breadth of winding track between, shots suddenly rang ahead, shout and oath and clash of arms. Lazar dismounted to reconnoitre. Five men dressed as gipsy carriers surrounded one in Cashmire cloth, high boots, and turban, who shouted vigorously as he fought. A camel kicked in dying throes ; a body lay still near by, and two horses were galloping down the pass.

Lazar struck in, and the gipsies did not wait to receive him. They fled into the arms of a dozen white-robed giants bounding to the rescue, and there was an end of them.

‘ Of God comes life and death, O friend of my heart and sword ! ’ cried the stranger fervently. ‘ Now, ye Shinwari free-men, brutes that devour my bread, is this how you look after your lord’s dues ? See that camel ! If I had not found it in the road, the cursed swindling beast would have gone by without paying me a cowrie ! Yea, I who feed you and your worthless families would have lost my life if this noble comrade had not turned up. Mark you all, this is my brother if by Allah’s grace I prove myself

deserving. Sir, I entreat you to turn aside and rest at my castle.'

'A servant's affairs give place to the master's command ! But some humble persons belonging to me wait yonder.'

'My house is mean, but in former days brave men dwelt there. Gild it, I entreat you, with the honour of your countenance.'

The castle of a frontier chief who had sworn brotherhood was just the asylum Lazar would have wished—no questions would be asked there. He told his mother the change of plan, and she resisted fiercely, asking when a Shinwari and a Momund met with sheathed swords? Lazar roughly silenced her, and drove the horses on, for Nuradeh began to protest. When the rear-guard of Shinwari footmen closed behind, he took his place beside the chief ahead. The latter made such explanations as are usual, told his name, family, and principal achievements, but asked no return ; for in all that relates to hospitality, the Pathan shows a generous tact wanting in other matters. Lazar said : 'Bid your free men fall back, my lord and brother. I have a grave story to entrust to you.'

He told how the lady following—hinted rather than alluded to—was a daughter of the Momund Khan, who forbad his suit. The lovers had run away before. After a week's concealment the Khan found his daughter in her husband's absence, and carried her to Dacea. From that point Lazar's story ran smooth. The chief heard it with alarm, but he swore to be faithful. If the Ameer took up this quarrel, he could not resist, but as for the Momunds he would kill and eat as many as the Khan despatched against him. And in any case he vowed to send Lazar and his belongings across the frontier. Meantime the persecuted couple might enjoy a second honeymoon. So far good ; Lazar hazarded another step. The Khan of Lalpoora had to some extent prejudiced his bride. She might ask to be received in the harem, away from her husband and his mother. This he begged might not be granted ; the chief nodded and changed the conversation, for talk of women is indecorous, however pressing the necessity. Endless and involved were the euphemisms through which they came to this understanding.

At the castle things turned out as Lazar expected, but the chief, forewarned, only made pretence of acceding to Nuradeh's wishes. She entered the harem, but the quarters assigned her were those usually occupied by the family of a guest, communicating with his. Protest and resistance were useless. So Lazar

obtained the opportunity of making love, which was all his self-confidence asked. When a good-looking, determined man is able to talk freely with a girl who has never in her life been courted, it is his own fault if he does not gain her heart. When, a month afterwards, the chief announced that messengers from the Ameer were on their way, Nuradeh required no persuasion to accompany her lover. They went to Nowshera, and were married. For a time they lived upon the mother's scanty fortune, hoping that the Ameer's favourite wife would plead their cause. At length she replied to her sister's constant letters by a note as brief as offensive. No hope remained in that quarter, nor in any other. Lazar found money sometimes in a mysterious way, but the Punjab is no theatre for adventurous pauperism. He went to Khelat with his wife's mother, and the Khan gave him some employment, but very little pay, at Quettah, which was not English ground at that time, of course. Here Lazar found daily opportunities to show both subtlety and daring, which he used with such diligence that the Candahari merchants complained to the Political Officer at Khelat. Desperate now, the accused fled into Afghanistan with some trusty followers. They chose a haunt by the Kojak Amram Pass, and levied black-mail on the caravans. Several expeditions sent against them failed, for the authorities shared the plunder; finally the chief merchants thought it more convenient, if pay they must, to negotiate with an honest and businesslike cut-throat rather than with dull, faithless footpads. In the later time Lazar built himself a castle, and his band paraded two hundred strong, when it sallied to resist the attack of Lieut. Wells, R.E. Their chief was killed in the fight, but death proved that his wife still loved him. Though the bullets were flying, and the troopers charging to and fro wherever brigands made a stand, Nuradeh rushed out, and clasped her husband's body, crooning over it. The sword had fallen from his hand. Mr. Wells passing, took it as a trophy, and the widow sprang forward with drawn knife. She gave him an ugly cut across the fingers, as we heard, before he could disarm her.

FREDERICK BOYLE.

The Matchmaker's Euclid.

Introduction.

THE art of match-making and eldest-son hunting having been long since reduced to a science by the mammas of fashionable life, it has been thought desirable to embody the same in writing for the benefit of posterity ; and in accomplishing this task the method of Euclid has been followed, both as one which will be universally understood, and as showing more clearly than any other the connection between the successive steps of the science.

Definitions.

1. An undesirable partner is one who has no town-house, and whose income has no magnitude.
2. A doubtful partner is title without wealth.
3. The extremities of a ball-room are the best to flirt in.
4. A bad business is the plain inclination of two young people to one another, who meet together, but are not in the same circles.
5. When one fair maiden 'sits on' another fair maiden (for 'outrageous flirting') so as to make the adjacent company notice her, each of the listeners will call it jealousy, and the fair maiden who sits on the other fair maiden will be called 'too particular' by them.
6. An obtuse angler is one who does *not* hook an eldest son.
7. An acute angler is one who does hook an eldest son.
8. A term of endearment is the extremity of a flirtation.
9. A blue-stocking is a plain figure having one decided line which is called her erudition, and is such that when forming the centre of a circle all young men will be found equally distant from that centre.
10. A figure is that which is compressed by a more or less confined boundary.

11. A good figure is that compressed within an inch of the owner's life.
12. Dull partners are such as, being drawn out ever so well in all directions, do not talk.

Postulates.

Let it be granted—

1. That an eligible young man may be drawn by skilful management from any one young lady to any other young lady.
2. That an engagement for one dance may be prolonged to any number of dances by a few fibs.
3. That a visiting circle may be extended to any extent from a West End square, and may be made to include a marquis resident at any distance from that square.

Axioms.

1. If your daughter be married to a nobody, the match is unequal.
2. If your daughter be married to a duke, the match is equal.
3. Elder sons are preferable to younger sons.
4. If wealth be added to younger sons, the two are equal.
5. If wealth be taken from elder sons, the two are equal.
6. Two short lines may enclose a proposal.
7. If one young lady meet with too much attention, so as to make the inferior angels on either side of her equal to tearing her eyes out ; this conduct, if continually repeated, shall at length meet with such reprobation at the hands of the said angels as shall lead one to believe that they are not *quite* angels.

PROPOSITION I.

Problem.

To secure an aristocratic partner by the help of a given (finite) number of charms.

Let a talent for dancing A, and a pair of fine eyes B, be the given finite number of charms. Let D be the aristocratic partner. It is required to secure D with A B.

Bring B to bear on an old gentleman C, whom you know to be acquainted with D. Tell the decided fib E that you are not engaged for this dance. Then, since the decided fib E is

equal to a very broad hint, if the aristocratic partner D pass by at that moment, he will be introduced.

Then with your captive D, and to the tune of the last waltz out, describe the circle of the room, and if at any point of the dance you meet the gentleman G, to whom you are really engaged, consoling himself with a new partner H, let that be the point when the dancers cut one another.

Then since it has been shown that your fine eyes B have had a great effect on the old gentleman C, much greater will be their effect on D; and with your charms A B you will have secured an aristocratic partner D.

Wherefore, &c. Q. E. F.

A. M. HEATHCOTE.

The Habits and Intelligence of Bees.

THE little busy bee has been a great favourite with the moralists and philosophers of this much-preached-at world. She and her works have been used to point so many morals to the intended disadvantage of the lord of creation, when his teachers take him to task in their sermons from the book of nature, that it is time some one undertook a serious examination of the claims of the little creature to be always posing as an example to the rest of the world. Not that it is to be expected that she would become less a subject of wonder and admiration, but rather because it would be interesting to be able to judge the exact amount of credit and respect to which she is entitled as an intelligent author of her own exemplary conduct.

There is no doubt at all events about the place of the bee in the insect tribe. In common with her cousins the ants, wasps, &c., she belongs to the order of hymenoptera, ranking first in the insect series not only in the higher development of the cerebral ganglia, and general intelligence in habits and mode of living which this implies, but also in general completeness of form and structure. When bees are spoken of, the representative of the family most familiarly associated with the name is the ordinary honey-bee (*Apismellifica*) which has for countless generations lived, laboured, and died an ignominious death in the straw skeps of our rustic gardens. The common variety is often known as the German bee, its original home having been the woods and mountains of Central Europe. A successful rival of late for the notice of the intelligent apiarist is the Ligurian bee (*Apis ligustica*) introduced from Italy, where in course of time, thanks to enforced separation from its relations north of the high ranges of mountains which hem in its native land, it developed those slight differences in structure and colour which now mark it as a separate variety. Both varieties were unknown in North America, until they were introduced from Europe; but they have thriven and multiplied enormously in their new home, especially in the Western States, where they are still known amongst the Indians as the white

man's fly. The other bees known in this country are the humble bees, of which there are several varieties; but, although very interesting in their behaviour and habits, as will be seen further on, these are but the bumpkins of the bee family, who are content to spend their rude lives in arcadian dulness, living from hand to mouth, with no capacity for the aspiring life and higher civilisation of their more gifted relations.

I am not a bee-keeper in the proper sense of the word. In my opinion, that occupation, on a large scale at all events, should in this country be left entirely to those possessed of an unwavering faith in our variable climate. My bees are not required, as the British workman sometimes holds himself to be, to toil from early morning to night, that the fruit of so much labour may one day be thanklessly appropriated for the benefit of a greedy master. If they choose, they need trouble themselves little for the future; for, if they have finished an unsuccessful season spent in rummaging the gardens of my neighbours around Clapham Common, the sweet stores of the nearest grocer are always liberally drawn upon for their benefit. One small colony is quite at home on a small stand in my room, having access to the outside through a little tube passing underneath my window-sill. The little creatures are, however, quite as anxious to get into the room as they are to go outside, for they probably think from experience that the world would be on the whole a very fine place to live in, if the good things thereof were within such easy reach as they usually find them when they are admitted from this side. Let me draw up the slide a little. There they are; the little heads thrust expectantly forward, squeezing each other in the endeavour to force a passage underneath. One little amazon has pushed her way through; and, as I want to introduce her to you, we will shut the door on the rest.

She is too much preoccupied rushing about in search of expected sweets to make her bow to the British public at the present moment. Look at her as she travels inquiringly round; is she not a well-bred, intelligent-looking little creature? Anyone can judge for himself, without finding it necessary to take a slice of her little brain to Professor Luys, to look at through his microscope. Intelligent in every motion, clean cut, compact in form, with no gaudy patches of colour in questionable taste, but refined, yet businesslike in appearance,—there is a general look about her which stamps her at once as belonging to the highest type of the insect race. We do not entertain a proper opinion of

the importance of the little creature. In our dull way we are inclined to estimate her place in the world by the amount of sugar-water she and her tribe can contribute in the year, reserving a shrewd suspicion in the background that if the whole species were to be extinguished to-morrow it might unaccountably happen in these days of Yankee enterprise that the supply of honey in the market would be in no way diminished. But we greatly underrate the importance of our little friend. If the British nation were to be suddenly blotted out of the world, the even tenor of nature's ways would be very little disturbed ; and, whatever the political world might do, the natural world would soon go on as smoothly and indifferently as if nothing had happened. But if our little friend the bee were to suddenly cease to exist, who shall describe the desolation and confusion which would invade the harmony of nature ? How many shy flower-virgins, in plain and hillside, would droop and pine for her coming ! How many noble long-pedigreed families in wood and valley, finding life insupportable, would give up the struggle for existence, and become extinct ! How would nature herself change her brightest hues and dress herself in sombre colours to mourn our little friend !

In these days of popular science it is hardly necessary to make more than passing reference to the part which the bee plays in nature. In the vegetable world it is a vital necessity that the fertilising pollen from the stamens of certain flowers should be carried to the pistils of other flowers, and the mission of the bee is to unconsciously carry the precious dust from blossom to blossom in her search after the tempting drop of nectar with which the shy flowerets reward the winged bearer of their love-messages. A wonderful and fascinating chapter in natural history is that which treats of the relations existing between flowers and insects. Flowers may be divided into two classes, those fertilised through the action of the wind, and those in which fertilisation is effected through the intervention of insects or a like agency. Darwin and others have shown what interesting stratagems flowers of the latter class resort to in order to secure the services of insects in this respect. Every little foible and weakness of the winged visitor is pandered to. What is commonly called a flower is indeed nothing more than a skilfully devised trap to attract the attention of insects, and then ensure their services towards fertilisation. Our little friend the bee is aesthetic in her tastes, and behold the varieties of

flowers vie with each other to beguile her attention in the display of the most artistic blending of colours and beauty of design. She likes sweet scents, and the laboratory of nature is called upon to distil the choicest perfumes to humour her. But these are but an advertisement for the nectar which it is the principal object of the bee to obtain, and when she has alighted in search of it, it is only to find that the flowers have in many cases devised the most exquisite little mechanical arrangements whereby she is unconsciously compelled to effect the object towards the fulfilment of which they have indulged in such a lavish expenditure of beauty and sweetness. It is all effected in the simplest manner through the great law of natural selection, here seen in operation in its severe simplicity ; for the flowers of those plants which present the greatest facilities for fertilisation get their seeds set, and so ensure the continuance of their species, while the unsuitable and unaccommodating kinds remain barren and are gradually weeded out. In a babel of tongues, and since first he found a voice, the poet has sung of the loves and sorrows of mankind, but nature still waits for him to interpret her heart ; if he ever learns to do so, there will be a new song in his mouth, for he will have a wonderful theme.

But nothing is perfect in this world, and I may, perhaps, be permitted a moment's digression here to refer to an instance on record of a wicked attempt to frustrate the design in all this adaptation of means to an end. My attention was first directed to the subject on the occasion of a letter which appeared in *Nature* some years ago referring to the export to New Zealand of two nests of our ordinary English humble-bees, in the hope that their descendants would come to the rescue of the colonists, who found that the red clover introduced from Europe would not set its seed and propagate its species in their country in the absence of the kindly help of the little attendants for whom it provides its honey. The writer expressed the hope that the humble-bees exported were not of a variety which he had observed had fallen into bad habits, in that the individuals, instead of obtaining the honey from the red clover in the manner intended by nature, had learnt to take unlawful possession of it by snipping a hole through the base of the tube containing it, without, of course, effecting the fertilisation of the flower in the act. I have myself often since had my attention directed to this habit in these bees, and it appears to be well established that this propensity to subvert the purposes of nature is largely developed in humble-bees under

certain circumstances, and not only in the case of the flowers of the red clover, but also those of the scarlet-runner and other plants. It appears, indeed, that our hive-bees also, if they are not actually guilty of the practice, do not scruple to take advantage of the easy access to the honey thus provided for them. Such practices, if they were to become the rule, would soon bring their own obvious punishment.

Like many of the disreputable shifts resorted to in trade, this habit is in all probability the result of fierce competition for the means of obtaining an honest livelihood—another example of the action and interaction of the various causes which silently produce change and progress in nature. The hive-bee, thanks to its habit of storing up food for winter use, as well as to the protection of man, is able to start work early in the year, and during the months of April, May, and June, it practically has the range of our fields and meadows all to itself. The colonies of humble-bees, however, store up no honey, and do not live through the winter, only a few of the young queens of last season surviving. In April and May the poor queen-mother has to seek out a retreat in which single-handed she proceeds to rear what only towards the beginning of July becomes a large family. Now when these issue forth to forage in the fields they find in many districts that, what with a host of competitors of their own kind—and the hive-bees, which are masters of the situation, having already turned the best part of the year to account—they can eke out but a very scanty subsistence, and so, like others in reduced circumstances, they take to the mostly illegal occupation of living by their wits. The humble-bee, no doubt, finds it saves time to obtain possession of the honey in the manner described, the stratagem in all probability being principally resorted to in order to forestall her rivals by obtaining first access to the honey stored in young flowers which have not yet opened of their own accord. This interfering with the purposes of nature is not to be commended perhaps, but the poor humble-bees, for all that, deserve, in my opinion, considerable credit for the ingenuity thus displayed in seeking to hold their own under difficult circumstances in this hard world. Anyone may convince himself of the keen competition which prevails amongst bees of all sorts towards the end of the season if he will take the trouble to observe our fields or hedgerows for a very short space at this time of year, or if he will count the number of times in an hour that a particular blossom

is visited by a bee—or would be visited if it contained honey, as it is not necessary for a bee to alight on a flower to know that she must go away empty. Darwin has left it on record, after carefully watching certain flowers, that each one was visited by bees at least thirty times in a day, and it cannot be supposed that the little visitors in such circumstances find much to reward their industry. Sir J. Lubbock has also shown that they will often visit from twenty to twenty-five flowers in a minute. It is very interesting to note that on such occasions bees always keep to the same species of flower during each visit to the fields, a seemingly unimportant fact first recorded by Aristotle, which has acquired new significance since we have learned what is the true relation existing between the bees and the flowers they visit.

Is the bee entitled to the eulogies which have been lavished upon her for so long as a tribute to instincts which some naturalists have held to be little short of reason? Entomologists of the present day seem to incline to the opinion that she is not. Despite the habits and wonderful social economy of bees, their acts upon analysis do not appear to be the result of such a highly developed intelligence as has been supposed.

For many generations naturalists have been loud in their praises of the architecture of the honeycomb, and they went into ecstasies when the mathematicians conclusively proved—after much disputing amongst themselves—that the bee in the structure of her hexagonal cell had solved the recondite problem of constructing her waxen storehouses with the maximum of strength and capacity combined with the minimum expenditure of material. Yet, however difficult it may be to believe it, it is now quite certain that the bee evinces no very extraordinary intelligence in producing the exquisite workmanship displayed in the honeycomb, with all its interesting arrangements of planes and angles. The first instinct of the bee was undoubtedly to construct a circular cell, and at present the work is always commenced by excavating a circular pit in the layer of wax from which the work proceeds. A moment's reflection will show that if all the cells were circular they would not fit closely together, and this would entail a great waste of space, as well as a large expenditure of wax in constructing a separate wall for each cell. Now, as the work of construction proceeds, both these undesirable contingencies are avoided in making the cell hexagonal, by simply straightening out, as it were, and eating away to a single thickness the original circular wall at the six points where it comes into contact with the walls of the surrounding cells.

If it were desirable to go into detail, it would be easy to show how easily and naturally this is accomplished in the manner in which bees work, and that without it being necessary to assume any extraordinary intelligence on the part of the little architects, who are guided by a few simple instincts, after the exercise of which the shape of the cell becomes a mathematical necessity.

Nevertheless, the honeycomb of the hive-bee is a wonderful instance of perfection in nature, and it has a place of its own in the story of evolution. Between it and the rude agglomeration of cells of the humble-bee there is a wide distance, and every step in the progress upwards has, no doubt, been taken through the operation of the law of natural selection.

The cells formed in the nest of the humble-bee arise in this way. The queen-mother commences by laying her eggs in a mass in a lump of matter composed of pollen and honey kneaded together, to form the food of the young grubs. When these are hatched out they burrow in the substance, and eventually spin their cocoons, and it is these cocoons, rudely fastened together with wax, which form the greater part of the irregular collection of cells found in the nests of humble bees. When the young bees have emerged, the empty cocoons are used for the storage of honey, and it is only when storage room of this sort is not available, that the bees display their rude attempts at the art of cell-building in forming rough waxen cups to hold the surplus honey. These last are the only cells which the humble bee actually builds, and in their structure it is not possible to trace even the rudiments of the wax-economising art of the hive-bee.

In tracing the development of the highly finished work of the hive-bee from such a rude beginning as this, it is only necessary to remember how vitally important to bees is the art of economising wax. It has been shown that the secretion of one pound of that costly material necessitates the consumption by the bees of from fifteen to twenty pounds of honey. It is easy to see, therefore, what an immense advantage it must have been to those colonies which long ago devised expedients for saving this precious material, and so were able to store up for winter use the large amount of honey which would otherwise have been consumed in its production. The advantage soon told in competition with other colonies, and so the progress was continued until the limit has been reached; for at the present time, in the structure of the honeycomb, perfection has been attained, there being simply no room for further progress.

The question to what extent bees possess the power of communication with each other has engaged the attention of many observers. Sir J. Lubbock's experiments with bees and also with ants were very interesting as tending to throw some light on this subject. He has shown that the ants of a colony recognised each other even after a separation lasting fifteen months. The bees of one colony always recognise each other also, even after prolonged absence, and, although it has not yet been clearly established, there seems to be good reason to believe that they do so principally by the sense of smell, and not by a pass-word or signal, as has been supposed. There is no doubt that bees possess a very keen sense of smell, and they are perhaps guided by it in many ways which it is difficult for us to understand. They evince a very strong dislike to all bad odours, and show a general preference for those smells which are pleasing to us.

An amusing instance of the dislike of bees to bad smells came under my notice some years ago. At the time in question there was in my father's garden a plot of early potatoes, some distance in front of a spot where stood several hives. Early in the season the rooks commenced to help themselves to the potatoes, grubbing the young tubers out of the ground, and doing so much mischief that some had to be shot, and the dead body of one was impaled in the middle of the plot as a warning and example to the rest. Soon after this a most unaccountable fury took possession of the bees. No one dared to approach them, for they attacked and instantly put to flight every person or animal which ventured into the garden. This went on for some days, with most unpleasant results, and the bees were fast becoming a nuisance in the neighbourhood, when the mystery was accidentally explained. Someone happening to pass by the impaled rook in the evening discovered the cause and centre of all the mischief. Every exposed part of the poor bird's body, especially about the mouth and eyes, was literally bristling with the stings of hundreds of bees, which had sacrificed themselves in a vain and senseless revenge upon its offensive presence. As the little creatures always die from the injury caused by the loss of the sting, the destruction must have been considerable amongst the bees, who in this case fell victims to their own extreme sensitiveness of smell.

It is often assumed that bees possess the power of communicating to each other ideas of a complex nature ; for instance, it has been stated that if a bee finds a store of honey, she will return with the news to her companions, who soon accompany her to share

in the find. This is undoubtedly true of ants, but in their case the explanation is obvious, and observation and experiment leave no doubt that ants are guided principally by the sense of smell in following up the traces of a companion to the source from whence she has brought the food. This explanation, however, cannot be accepted in the case of bees, for it is not to be supposed that they could follow the track of a companion through the air by scent. It has not, however, been proved beyond doubt that a bee will lead her companions to a store of food in this way, though the experiments of Sir John Lubbock and others point to the conclusion that bees can bring friends, though they have not the power of directing them, to treasures at a distance.

As we owe to the bees' taste in colours most of the artistic arrangement of tints in our bright-coloured flowers, Sir J. Lubbock's experiments on the colour-sense in bees have attracted considerable attention. His experiments show that blue is essentially the bees' favourite colour; after which come, in order of preference, white, yellow, red, green, and orange. That there are not so many blue flowers as might be expected is explained by the probability that all plants with blue flowers are descended from ancestors with green flowers, which, under the influence of what may be called bee-culture, have passed through stages of white, yellow, and generally red before becoming blue.

Although the vision of bees is very good in some respects, they show little intelligence in finding their way in certain circumstances. Sir J. Lubbock experimented with a bee which he put into a bell-glass, turning the closed end to the light, only to find that she generally buzzed about for a long time in a vain endeavour to get out at the closed end, while flies placed in the glass in the same way soon made their escape.

I have always found bees very stupid in this way. Last summer I placed a nest of humble-bees in a large glass vase, some fifteen inches in diameter, and nine in height. I kept the nest in my room, and, for several days after it was placed in position, the workers crowded towards the side next the light, making vain attempts all day long to get out, and this although the top was quite open, and the surface of the nest only a few inches below the rim of the vase. It was some time before I noticed any of the bees get out, other than by what could only have been accident, although I watched the nest for some hours daily. It could not be said that the change in position of their home had unduly confused the older bees, for those born

while the nest was under observation showed the same want of intelligence, and up to the end of the season in the daytime a few bees were always at the side of the glass next the light, beating about in a vain endeavour to get out.

Bees do not seem to possess the feeling of affection or attachment; even the respect for their queen savours of the coldest utilitarianism, and when through either accident or circumstances she ceases to be of use to the colony for the one purpose for which she is maintained, she is abandoned or superseded apparently without the slightest compunction or regret by her so-called subjects. Bees never seem to help each other in difficulty or distress, as is often done by ants. If you hold a bee captive by the leg, the others either take no notice of her struggles or do not attempt in any way to assist her. If you go further, and crush her to death, they quietly crowd around, and, in the most callous fashion, show their utter indifference by helping themselves to the sweet juices expressed from the body of their unfortunate companion. Yet if bees are fed regularly they often exhibit a kind of selfish friendliness somewhat akin to that displayed by the cats of the neighbourhood towards the cat's-meat man on his round. During several attempts which I have made to keep alive during the winter the queens of colonies of humble bees, I have particularly noticed it in those bees.

I first tried keeping the bees in little wooden boxes, which I always opened at feeding time, allowing the occupants to walk about for a little before putting them back in their boxes. I was surprised to find after a little time how the bees expected to be fed when the boxes were opened, coming familiarly on to my hand in search of food, and making themselves quite at home. One royal princess I had who always made such intelligent attempts to escape on these occasions that I was obliged to discontinue the practice in her case, and I fed her instead through an air-hole in the lid of her box. I, however, continued to take out her box with the others, and after a short time I was much amused to find her generally thrusting her long flexible tongue through the hole in the lid as soon as she knew that feeding operations were going on, as if she would by this means remind me that I must not overlook her. This bee I used to believe had a brilliant future before her, and it was a matter of great regret to me when I was one day the unintentional agent of her destruction. In mild weather she used to be always on the watch for an opportunity to get out of her box, and one fine

December morning when I lifted the lid she took a short flight across the room. In searching for her, I accidentally crushed her on the carpet beneath my slipper, and so ended her brief career.

Sir J. Lubbock, after many experiments on the power of hearing in bees and ants, states that he never could satisfy himself that these insects heard any sounds which he could produce. In the case of bees it would be a great surprise to many to hear that they are absolutely incapable of hearing, and it must not be assumed that they are so because experiments have as yet yielded no satisfactory result. From time immemorial it has been the habit with rustic bee-keepers at the time of swarming to invoke the aid of noise to hasten the alighting of the bees. With some, it takes the form of drumming on a tin kettle, others beat candlesticks together, or even put their faith in the strains of a concertina or violin. Everyone has his own theory as to the object of this performance. One does it to overpower the hum of the swarm so that the individual bees may think they are left alone, and so make haste to alight. Another does it to keep the bees in the neighbourhood with the charms of the music; and a third hopes to drown the notes of the guides which may be ready to lead off the swarm to distant parts previously explored in search of an eligible spot to alight in. It is remarkable, however, that all agree in assuming that the bees hear and are acted upon by the noise produced.

Sir John Lubbock has recently tried a further series of interesting experiments to decide the question as to how far the power of hearing is developed in bees. To what extent music has power to charm the bee or guide her instincts may be judged from the result of an experiment of which he read an account at a meeting of the Linnean Society in November 1882.

Some honey was placed on a musical box on his lawn, and the box was kept going for a fortnight, during which time the bees regularly helped themselves to the honey. The box and honey were then removed out of sight into the house, and, although placed near an open window and only seven yards from the previous position, the bees failed to find the honey, although those brought to it in its new position afterwards found the way readily enough. He, however, declines to say that bees are incapable of hearing, and thinks it not impossible that insects may perceive higher notes than we can hear, and may even possess a sense or perhaps sensations of which we can form no idea; for although we have no special organs adapted to certain

sensations, there is no reason why it should be the case with other animals, while the problematical organs possessed by some of the lower forms favour this suggestion. He is of opinion that the sounds which bees hear may be not the low loud sounds but the higher overtones at the verge of or beyond our range of hearing.

It is, however, remarkable that bees certainly do seem to hear on some occasions. The note with which the old queen threatens the royal brood as they come to maturity, and swarming time approaches, and so well known to apiarists under the name of 'piping,' can often be distinctly heard some distance from the hive, and is evidently intelligible to the young queens, for they respond in tones perfectly audible to the listener. Although bees will take no notice of a very loud noise even quite close to the hive, it is, however, remarkable that the slightest tap on the hive itself, or any of its attachments, or even a heavy tread some distance off, immediately disturbs them.

Despite the study and observation to which bees have been subjected, their habits and instincts are still a promising and most interesting subject of inquiry. The strange relation of the sexes has received more attention than perhaps any other subject connected with these little insects, both on account of the interest attaching to it, and also because of its bearing upon other questions. The subject is, however, still full of difficulty, and the more it is investigated the more the interest attaching to it seems to grow.

In a colony of bees there are the drones (males), the queen (female), and the workers (neuters). It has long been known that the neuters are merely imperfect females, and the bees possess the wonderful instinct which leads them, in the event of the loss of their queen, to take a young worker grub or egg, and, by special feeding and the enlargement of its cell, to rear from it a new queen. It has been proved that parthenogenesis always prevails in the production of the male bee, the egg which produces a drone being always unimpregnated even when laid by an impregnated queen. A virgin queen will also lay eggs abundantly, and it has been conclusively proved that these eggs will come to maturity, and that they will invariably produce drones. Now, the bees always build a certain quantity of what is called drone-comb, in which the cells are larger than ordinary, and it is in these cells, and in these only, that the queen lays the eggs which produce drones. A knowledge of this circumstance first led to the assumption that the sex of the young bee was determined simply by the size of

its cell, but this theory was soon abandoned, as it is settled beyond doubt that the sex of the egg is determined at the very moment at which it is laid. The theorists were then driven back on an ingenious explanation as to the mechanical effect of the shape of the cell upon the queen in the act of depositing the egg. This view has, however, also been rendered untenable by the result of experiments which place it beyond question that the sex of the eggs is altogether independent of the shape or size of the cells in which they are laid; for, with no drone-comb, the queen will sometimes lay drone-eggs in worker cells, from which eggs drones will be produced, and she will also, if necessary, though with great reluctance, lay worker-eggs in drone-cells. It would thus appear that we must concede to the queen bee the surprising instinct or intelligence which enables her to lay at will a drone-egg or a worker-egg, for in the hive she often passes immediately from the worker to the drone cells or *vice versa*, depositing an egg at the bottom of each which always produces a bee of the sex intended. This instinct is rendered more wonderful when it is remembered that the number of drones produced in a hive is always regulated by the wants of the colony. The questions suggested by the manner of the production of the worker-bee are also highly interesting. It has been mentioned that the bees, when they require a queen, will take a worker egg or grub and by special feeding rear from it an ordinary queen bee. It has generally been stated that the young queen is in such cases fed with richer food known as royal food, but it seems by no means unlikely that we shall soon learn that this is slightly incorrect, and that the queen grub is in such cases simply fed with as much food as it requires. This would mean that the queen state is that to which all the worker-grubs would develop in normal circumstances, and that the bees deliberately and for social reasons prevent this natural development by a *régime* of low diet. Mr. Cook, Professor of Entomology in the Michigan State Agricultural College, who has made a special study of bees, gives it as the result of his observations that the bees feed the worker-grubs sparingly, as if fearing an excessive development—a truly wonderful instinct which has enabled the bees to solve one of the most difficult of social problems. In the construction of the honeycomb the bees anticipated the mathematicians: have they not here again anticipated the philosophers?

BENJAMIN KIDD.

The Attaman :

A TALE OF THE KOSAKS.

ADAPTED FROM THE POLISH.¹

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'REATA,' 'BEGGAR MY NEIGHBOUR,' &c.

I.

THE banks of the river Dnieper, usually so peaceful, were to-day crowded with martial figures. The grazing flocks have had to make way for soldiers and steeds; alike the flowers and the ripening grain have been trampled under foot, and mingled with the voice of the rushing water comes the neighing of horses and the clank of arms.

For many days past the country had been alive with horses and men: from all directions, all sides, solitary riders had been seen wending their way across the desolate steppes,² now and then joining together in little groups of threes and fours as their practised eyes recognised a comrade in a distant speck on the horizon, or distinguished a lance through the brushwood of a copse—all converging towards one point, all animated by the same motive. Red *kalpaks*³ were spotted over the country as thickly as poppies among the ripening corn, till all were drawn together into one long garland, and the entire army assembled on the banks of the river.

It was the Attaman Kunicki, the father of the Kosaks, who had thus summoned together his forces, and when all were collected, entering the assembly of chiefs, he spoke as follows:—

'Noble chieftains! I have received an order from our master the King, but without your advice and concurrence I neither can nor will decide anything, and have therefore resolved to inform you of it, and after the reading of the message we can then deliberate upon what answer is to be given. Let the secretary produce the royal letter and read it aloud.'

¹ This story is founded on an historical incident.

² Plains.

³ A military head-covering.

The Attaman, having finished speaking, made way for the secretary, who, taking from his breast the letter wrapped in a linen cloth, unfolded the parchment and thus read:—

‘ Sieur Attaman of Ukrania !

‘ The dangers which threaten alike Christianity and the safety of our kingdom have decided us upon conducting an expedition to put a barrier to the Ottoman powers. For this reason I have summoned you, Sieur Attaman, along with your brave Kosaks, to join us in the war to which we have pledged ourselves, your fidelity, readiness, and valour being well known to us.

‘ We therefore expect and desire that on receiving our letter you will put yourself at the head of your troops, and, traversing all the provinces which recognise the Sultan’s authority, will cut off the passage of the infidels should they attempt to send reinforcements to head-quarters.

‘ You will divide your forces as you think best, and entrust the subordinate commands to those you deem worthy of confidence.

‘ Commending you to the protection of the Almighty, and counting on your promptness and fidelity,

‘ Your King and Master,

‘ JOHN III.’

Dead silence followed the reading of this letter, but when the tongues are quiet the minds are all the more busy at work, and every brow was drawn together in thoughtful perplexity. It was an ancient chieftain who finally broke the silence, and stroking his snow-white beard thus spoke:—

‘ My brothers and my lord Attaman, it is now late in the year, and this undertaking is a difficult and a perilous one ; it had, methinks, been more wise to await the coming of spring, but when the King has spoken it is not for the Kosaks to hang back. Therefore, if it so please you, let us go forward in the name of the Lord and seek to destroy the infidel Turk.’

Noisy acclamations greeted this speech.

‘ To war ! to war ! Lead us forward, Father Attaman, against the enemy !’

‘ My brothers,’ said Kunicki, when silence was again restored, ‘ it is now full nine years since you did me the honour to elect me as your Attaman, and until now it has pleased the Almighty to bless my sword with success, and to enable me to lead you victoriously in all encounters with the enemy. When five years ago, contrary to the usages of our people, I took to me a wife, I wished

to resign my authority and hand over the crane's feather¹ to some other man unfettered by family ties. But you, my brothers, you would not accept my demission, and so I remained your Attaman as before, in which position I have always striven to do my duty towards you and my country.'

Loud cries of 'Thou hast! thou hast! Father Attaman!' interrupt him, then he proceeds:—

'I have always kept in mind that an Attaman has no right to think of himself, and the moments I have snatched from you to press to my heart my wife and child have been few and far between. Now, however, that our master the King summons us to a longer and more perilous undertaking, I wish to ask you again whether you are indeed satisfied to place yourselves under my guidance? If you have more confidence in some other man, if you have misgivings lest the remembrance of my home should make me less eager to advance into the enemy's country, lest the thought of my Ilandzia's dark eyes, the smile of my little Sawka, should render my vision less keen to mark a foe, you have only to speak and I am ready to yield my place to whosoever you choose, accompanying you as your comrade and brother wherever my successor may think fit. Let not a false regard for my person restrain you from expressing your wishes. Whatever you decide will be well chosen.'

But the Kosaks answer him as with one voice, which rises and swells like the rolling of thunder:—

'To whom should we entrust ourselves, if not to thee, Father Attaman? Is there another man who can wield his lance as thou canst, as lightly as a clerk wields his pen? Whose sword can like thine make the enemies' heads to drop like overblown poppy-flowers? What other can swim like the wild duck, and dive like the otter under the waves of the Dnieper? Which man knows better how to castigate a rebel with the flat of the broadsword? And who can lead us as thou hast done many a time in the wild dance against the Tartar hordes? Lead us now against the infidel Turk; we will have no other Attaman but Kunicki!'

And they pressed around him, embracing his feet and his knees; they raise him on their shoulders, exclaiming 'Glory be to God! Long live our Attaman! Long live the Kosaks! Death to the infidels!' till the banks of the river re-echo for miles around with the sound of their cries.

When at length Kunicki has extracted himself from their embrace, he speaks again:—

¹ The Attaman used to wear in his cap a crane's feather as symbol of vigilance.

‘ So be it, my brother; we shall start with the early dawn, and be far on our way ere the sun reaches the summit of the sky. In time of war the drink of a Kosak is water, and his food dry bread and salted fish. Before the forty days of Lenten fasting even the monks are allowed to eat and make merry, and God alone knows how long our Lent may last. Master Yessoul,¹ deal out the mead, the spirits, and the provisions among our Kosak brothers; let each one feast and rejoice to-day, for who can tell what to-morrow may bring ? ’

Provisions and drink are distributed among the soldiers; large bonfires, kindled on the river banks, illumine the country far around, painting each warlike face with a ruddy glow, catching the burnished point of each shining lance, and filling the gloomy river with the crimson light of the dancing flames. On the fires are placed gigantic cauldrons full of steaming millet gruel, huge quarters of pork are set roasting on the spits, while glittering heaps of silver tench, scarce withdrawn from the waves, lie waiting to be watered down with draughts of sparkling mead; and large sacks of dried plums, emptied on to the ground, fill the air with their fragrance, rejoicing the warriors’ hearts. For the Kosak finds no fruit as sweet as the purple plum, no potage to be compared to millet gruel, no meat as savoury as pork, nor fish as delicate as the tench. And the repast being ready, they gather round the fires in groups; the horns are filled to overflowing with fiery spirits, and frothy mead sparkles in every goblet. They eat and drink, and laugh and shout, and make merry; and the Attaman eats and drinks, and makes merry with the rest; but every now and then his eye wanders from the glowing fire and the good cheer spread before him, and he holds the goblet unemptied in his hand, while his gaze searches the far horizon.

As the night grows darker, the merriment waxes faster and more furious; horns are emptied with lightning-like rapidity; the Attaman is pressed to sing, and the Kosaks join in the chorus. Then they dance their national dance, each man with his hands on the haunches; they bound, they stamp, they clank their spurs together till the ground trembles and the voice of the mighty river is no longer heard. Agile as frogs, alternately crouching on the ground and leaping into the air, their plaits of hair swing backwards and forwards with every movement, heads and heels change place with inconceivable swiftness, till many a one drops asleep in the midst of a somersault.

¹ Steward, keeper of provisions.

By the time the stars are all shining in the heavens, the river-side is thickly strewn with prostrate figures ; and except for one or other who murmurs in his dreams curses against the infidel Turk, there is silence in the camp.

Then the Attaman rises slowly from beside the low-burning camp fire, and stepping cautiously through the ranks of slumbering warriors, goes to rouse his faithful steed ; and though he has been dancing and making merry, his eye is not drowsy ; and though he has quaffed of the spirits and of the mead, his step is not unsteady.

He mounts and speeds along faster than the wind by the banks of the river ; faster and yet faster where the waters, gleaming pale in the starlight, murmur and sob mid the reeds, and nothing living is astir save the wild-fowl, startled, perchance, from her nest.

II.

A WOODEN house, whitewashed, and with thatched roof, standing against a dark oak forest, shines dazzling white in the moonlight.

It is midnight, and everyone within is asleep—no, not everyone, for a solitary light burns at one casement, and a woman paces up and down a large room.

The room has got heavy wooden beams across the ceiling, white walls, and a wide chimney-place. The woman has got black eyes and rosy curved lips, and a waist that is round and firm. She is young and beautiful, but with the beauty of a young matron, not that of a maiden. She resembles the rose which is open but not yet overblown, or the berry which is ripe without being past its prime. She wants but a smile to make her beauty perfect ; but she smiles not ; her white brow is drawn together in an anxious frown, and a sigh escapes from her heaving breast. The spinning distaff cast on the ground and the undisturbed couch, speak alike of a mind too ill at rest to be soothed by work or sleep.

Behind a curtain a beautiful boy of four is wrapped in slumber, his even drawn breathing the only sound to be heard in the quiet room. But presently another sound breaks the silence—the dogs outside have given the alarm, and bark furiously as the galloping noise of horses' hoofs is heard drawing near, till a well-known voice restores them to silence, and the doors are thrown open wide to admit the master of the house.

In another moment Ilandzia, the *Attamanycha*¹ is in her husband's arms.

'Dearest husband! what joy to see thee again. Say, wilt thou stay awhile with us?'

'But short, but short, my dearest. I come but to see if thou art well, to kiss thee but once, and then say farewell. Such is the fate of the Kosak. The King orders me to march against the infidels; a simple Kosak cannot disobey him, still less an Attaman. Ilandzia, dearest, dry thy tears. If God permits, I shall return here safe and well; if fate has decreed that I shall remain yonder, under a mound of earth, remember wife that thou art the mother of my child, and bring him up to be a brave and a worthy Kosak. Farewell, farewell! My heart bleeds to leave you both, but I dare not linger.'

He bends once more over his sleeping child, holds his wife for one instant more to his heart, and is gone again; while Ilandzia sinks down sobbing near the couch of her son.

III.

THE Kosak army have set forth on the march—eight thousand as gallant men as ever wielded the sword and the lance. The populace salute them loudly on their passage, and many a maiden's heart follows them over the frontier.

And now they have reached the enemy's country, and everywhere their victorious blades have made way for them. They have passed through fertile lands teeming with golden grain, purple vines, and rich flocks, and like an army of locusts have they passed on, bringing devastation and death, and leaving the country behind them stripped and naked, with smoking ruins and rifled granaries.

In vain do the Mussulmans cry out 'Aman! Aman!' (mercy); for the Kosak knows no Aman. Their scimitars cut like the blade of a razor, and their bullets carry death all around. The rivers run red with the blood of the slain, and their corpses are strewn all over the land.

And they march onwards with their chariots heaped with rich booty, with gold and silver and precious stones, with silken scarves and cunningly wrought ornaments. Further and further they advance into the Turkish territory, further and ever eastwards, for success had made them bold; and it seemed as though their foes

¹ Wife of an Attaman.

had flown at their approach, for the land which they now traverse is silent as a desert ; they are alone in the vast steppe, where they neither see a human face nor hear a human voice : only the wolf howls in the far distance, and the boa hisses through the stunted grass, while the light-footed sumak, the wild-goat of the steppes, bounds away scared through the silvery *sznwarz*,¹ or the wary bustard, standing guard on a rising hillock, by its cry gives warning of the approach of man.

And so the first breath of winter finds the Kosaks many hundred miles away from their homes. Hard frosts have rent the earth asunder in many places, and a slight powdering of snow warns man and beast to draw themselves under shelter for the winter.

Kunicki is obliged to encamp his troops for a while and await the movements of the enemy. He has chosen a deep sombre valley in which to entrench his army, closed in by rocky heights on either side ; and here he prepares to abide until he gets further news.

The chieftains shake their heads, for they love not this valley. Is it not justly named the valley of misfortune ? And when did it ever bring aught but woe to whoever has set foot in it ? No traveller passes this way without signing himself many times to keep the spirits of evil aloof. But they dare not speak or murmur against Kunicki's will, for in time of war the Attaman is omnipotent, and his word is held sacred as the word of God himself.

And the snow creeps on stealthily, wrapping everything around in white, and weaving many a shroud and winding sheet. The whole valley is steeped in a dense white mist, and the icicles hang thickly clustered along the black rock walls, where never a ray of sunshine can penetrate to melt them away. At night the wolf, growing bolder, looks down from the heights at the sleeping army, with his eyes full of a green and greedy fire ; and the birds of prey hover overhead and weary not of waiting, for they are patient as they are cruel, and they know that their time must come at last.

The army itself has sunk into a winter torpor. A general gloom pervades the camp. There is no more singing and dancing, no more feasting or rejoicing. Moody and shivering the men crouch together, watching with apathetic eye the fate of those who daily fall lifeless beside them, struck to the heart by the winter's icy poignard.

¹ Bushes, which grow in the steppes.

Then at last come the scouts, and report that a large horde of Tartars have been distinguished hovering on the horizon. New life is diffused into the desponding ranks; the prospect of an encounter warms each heart and cheers each spirit; for in warfare nothing is so hard to bear as suspense and inaction, and the bravest men that do not quail before fire or steel lose courage if obliged to await their fate with folded arms.

At the head of his troops the Attaman advances into the plain and ranges them for battle; but the wily enemy keeps out of reach, and evades an encounter with the Kosaks, who are obliged at nightfall to return to the valley without having fired a shot or crossed a sword.

The snow is falling fast as they regain the camp, and all night long it comes down silently in large white flakes, blotting out all marks on the landscape, and filling up each footprint of man or beast with soft white fur, till at daybreak, when the Kosaks again advance to seek the foe, an unbroken white surface lies before them.

Thus they proceed through the silent valley, seeing not a hundred paces before them for the dense white mist which the torpid winter sun has not had the strength to disperse. They can see nought but grey pointed rocks on all sides of them—grey rocks to the front, to the right, and to the left of them, all looming at them coldly through the fog.

But now the grey rocks in front seem to assume other shapes; they grow at once more distinct and more fantastic in appearance. No longer mere rocks, they look like phantoms; no longer mere phantoms, they look like men—like Tartars!

It is but too true; the vast hordes are ranged in a semicircle awaiting them, and behind there are Tartars also—Tartars everywhere closing round them!

The white pennon denoting the presence of the Khan is flying overhead, and the shrill note of the *tabalszana*¹ resounds from the rocks, while a hailstorm of poisoned arrows comes pouring in on the Kosaks.

They adjust their guns and prepare to make a desperate resistance. Fifty times are they forced back, but fifty times do they advance again. Inch by inch do they fight their way to the entrance of the valley, and at last they reissue from it, victorious indeed, but with the loss of five thousand brave men.

They leave the cursed valley heaped with the bodies of the

¹ A musical instrument.

slain, both men and horses, a terrible and hideous sight. Here lie the Kosak and the Tartar, clutching each other in the last death-struggle; there a grinning head has rolled away from its trunk; dying horses neigh piteously as the rabid vulture bears down upon them, and everywhere the snow has disappeared, melted away by the warm blood and the smoking corpses.

IV.

SLOWLY and sadly the Attaman prepares to return homewards with the wreck of his army. They have cast from their chariots all the rich spoil they had taken, to make room for the wounded warriors. They have thrown out the gold and silver to rust away among the barren rocks, and the rich furs and silken stuffs lie rotting in the mire. Of what good is gold or silver to them when they have lost the flower of their chivalry? Can sparkling diamonds or glowing rubies make up for the blood of the brave?

But the curse of the valley of misfortune seems to pursue them even further, for with each day their numbers grow less; cold sickness, and famine are all busy at work mowing down fresh victims. The Tartars, though superior in numbers, do not again dare to approach at close quarters, yet they hover around in wide circles, their piercing cry, like the voice of the wild curlew, for ever irritating the ear, and their poisoned darts still finding their way to many a brave heart.

The Attaman fights gallantly against despair; he watches over the army as a father over his children; he animates and encourages them like a brother; he consoles and tends them like a mother. He thinks and provides for them like a chief, yet he shares each hardship and fights like a simple soldier. His *csapka*¹ is pierced through and through by the enemy's darts, and his *burka*² hangs ragged from sabre cuts, yet his body, as though shielded by a magic charm, is preserved unscathed.

Only as they draw near the frontier of Ukrania do the Tartars cease haunting their passage, and are gradually lost to sight in the wide steppes.

The Attaman, with only three hundred men remaining, regains his native soil. At the frontier they meet the first Zaporogue³ sentinels, who salute them silently. No word is spoken on either

¹ Head-covering.

² Coat.

³ Zaporogue, or Saporogue, was the name of the people who inhabited the country near the Dnieper. These Kosaks usually went by the name of the Zaporogue Kosaks.

side ; no news of the war is asked or given ; only the patrol hands over to Kunicki a parchment, signed by the chiefs, ordering him to repair at once to Biala-Cerkiew, where they sit in council ; for the Attaman, who is sovereign lord and master as long as he is in the enemy's country, is bound to submit to the council of chiefs as soon as he has again put foot on his native soil.

There are neither threats nor reproaches in this document : why, then, does the Attaman feel a cold chill run through his veins ? And why does his gallant chestnut hang its head and stumble as though it would fall to the ground ? The Attaman's horse is sagacious as a human being, and has the instinct to feel when misfortune is at hand.

In all the villages where they pass through, the people crowd together to see their Father Attaman and his brave Kosaks on their passage ; but when they behold but a handful of men, pale, and more like a band of spectres, they greet them with silent tears instead of songs of joy, and in place of noisy acclamations they wring their brothers' hands in mute affliction.

The snow has now left the earth, and Nature is putting on her most smiling garb ; the plains are covered with a fresh carpet of emerald green, from every bough hang snowy blossoms, the air is fragrant with the breath of violets and full of sweet music. But the Attaman gazed not at the green plains nor at the flowers, the violet has no perfume for him, nor can the song of the lark take the sadness from his heart.

And when they reach Biala-Cerkiew the populace does not come out to greet them, nor are the bells ringing joyfully ; only one of the chiefs awaits them, and conducts the Attaman to where the council is sitting.

In a vast hall, with benches ranged around it, the grey-haired chieftains are seated, awaiting Kunicki's arrival. They are all clothed in long sheepskin pelisses, their heads covered with black csapkas. In the centre of the room on a table stands a crucifix and the book of Gospels ready opened, and near it waits the black-robed Archimandrite.¹

' My lords,' says Kunicki, entering the assembly, ' I have come hither to hear your bidding.'

' Father Attaman,' answers the most ancient among the chieftains, ' what hast thou done with the army of Ukrania ? where hast thou left the flower of our Kosaks ? Eight thousand of our bravest men did we entrust to thee, and but three hundred hast thou brought home.'

¹ Priest.

‘My lords,’ replies the Attaman, uncovering his head, but holding himself upright, ‘my heart is stabbed with grief when I think of the sufferings our soldiers have endured, but it swells with pride when I remember what they have done. Scores of towns and villages sacked and burnt, the inhabitants of two provinces cut to pieces—these are our deeds. The vast hordes of Tartars, along with sickness, hunger, and cold, have destroyed the rest of our army. Such was the will of the Almighty and my misfortune. God is my witness, and with Him the three hundred Kosaks who have returned, that I have neither spared my arm nor shielded my breast in their defence.’

‘Canst thou swear it?’ again asked the ancient chief.

‘I will swear it on the Gospel.’ And the Archimandrite reading aloud the formula of the oath, the Attaman kneels, and kissing the cross, swears by the blood of the Saviour that he has spoken the truth, and will relate to them on his conscience all that has taken place. And rising, he details to them from beginning to end all the events of this disastrous campaign. The recital of so much misery and misfortune touches everyone to tears, and the chieftains shake their hoary heads as one after another they withdraw to the debating room.

Kunicki remains alone, his eyes fixed mournfully on the ground, his clasped hands resting on the hilt of his sword, motionless as a statue. He raises not his eyes even when after a time the doors are reopened and the council return, and one of them takes the word:—

‘Father Attaman! The chieftains do not accuse thee either of treason or of cowardice; they acknowledge thy valour, nor do they complain of thy fidelity, and recognise thy behaviour to have been throughout upright and honourable. Never yet has there been an Attaman dearer to the hearts of the Kosaks. But the interests of the nation command us to put aside all personal feelings, and therefore as till now there has been no instance of a chief returning without his army, it will be wise to make an example of this case, so as to foresee and prevent any recurrence of the same. A less noble man might be punished by degradation from his office; but thou, Kunicki, shalt not be stripped of thy dignity in favour of any other man: this were ingratitude on our part. So Attaman thou shalt remain till thy death. Yet as the council in its wisdom does not deem it to be seemly that an Attaman should survive the loss of his army, it will be

advisable that thy noble life should come to a speedy termination.

‘Father Attaman! Thou shalt die by the sword of thine own people, but thy death shall be a noble and an honourable one, in consideration of the many and valuable services thou hast rendered to the nation. Thou shalt keep to the last the honours due to thy rank, and be executed as befits an Attaman and leader of the Kosaks. Only to lay thy head on the block wilt thou put aside the crane’s feather, and thy successor shall not be elected till thy body is laid in the earth.’

Kunicki raised his head, and viewed the assembly calmly, without agitation, without fear, as he answered:—

‘My lords, far be it from me to make any petition or prayer for mercy. Let your judgment take its course; but before my death I should wish once more to see my wife and child, and say farewell. Fix a day for my execution, and I swear to be punctual, on my honour as Kosak and as Attaman.’

Several voices answered sadly: ‘Father Attaman! Take as much time as thou pleasest—a week, a month if necessary.’

But Kunicki returns: ‘The longer I wait the greater will be the pain. What is deferred must equally come to pass. One day will suffice, and I thank you for that. Farewell, till to-morrow.’

He leaves the assembly, passing down the ranks of chiefs, who all uncover and profoundly salute the Attaman as he goes.

V.

DURING the long dreary winter there had been sorrow and mourning within the white house which stood at the edge of the oak forest. No sound of music or of mirth ever issued from its closed casements, no gay pennon floated on the roof. Like a virgin coffin, it slept there through frost and snow, with the sombre phantoms of the naked oak trees keeping watch around.

But now the enchantress spring had passed over the land, breathing on each tree and shrub, and warming them afresh to life and beauty. With a lavish hand she had emptied her cornucopia over the floor of the forest, replacing the dull bronze of last year’s dead leaves by the enamelled hues of violet and primrose. Each black spectre tree has been transformed into a marvel of loveliness, and in the boughs overhead the wood-pigeon and the nightingale make the groves melodious with their love-songs.

And within the white house renewed joy and hope has stolen in along with the beauty of the flowers and the song of the birds. When everything without is blooming and beaming, despair and gloom can no longer retain their sway over the heart.

The winter had been long and dreary, and Ilandzia had mourned and wept and pined in solitude; but now the end of her troubles is at hand, for is not her husband to be restored to her again? Many a sleepless night had she passed in thinking of the dangers to which he was exposed, not knowing each moment whether she ought not to be bewailing him as dead. But now at last a joyful day had come to her, for she has heard that he has alike escaped the cruel scimitar of the Turk, the poisoned arrow of the Tartar, the tainted breath of disease, and the sharp tooth of the frost. He is alive and unscathed, and will soon be given back to her faithful heart.

But she has also heard of the dire misfortunes which have attended this campaign; how want and sickness have destroyed the once gallant army, and how of eight thousand brave men that marched forth to attack the Turk, only three hundred have returned. Like a true patriot, she mourns her country's losses, and like a tender woman she grieves for those many other women who, less fortunate than she is, will not be able to welcome back a son, a husband, a lover.

But all the while her own happiness is so great that it fills her heart to overflowing, and will not let sadness remain there. The long dreary winter seems short now that she is so near her reward. The sweetness of their meeting will be all the greater from having been so long deferred. How she will caress and console him for all the troubles he has gone through; her loving care shall make him forget his hardships, and the sight of his child shall soften the bitter memory of those other sons he has lost.

And Ilandzia, with a smile in her eyes and a song on her lips, goes about in and outside the dwelling-house, directing and disposing each household detail, so as worthily to welcome the beloved guest she expects.

And everything shines and beams as in joyful anticipation; never before had the young oak leaves seemed as vividly green, nor the new-born lambs as dazzlingly white, nor the promise of the orchard as rich. And never either had Ilandzia herself appeared as lovely and as fair, for joy is a mighty beautifier, and sets off a woman's fairness as with a golden crown.

Gayest and happiest is little Sawka, who with the buoyancy of youth revels in the beauty of the day, in the sunshine, and in his mother's smile, which he had not seen for so long. Light-footed as the wild fawn, he is for ever in motion—now racing over the meadows in headlong chase after the lambs and kids, now riding astride on the large shaggy wolf-hounds, now climbing aloft to play hide and seek among the twisted boughs of the gnarled oak trees.

Of a sudden he comes running in breathless over the green sward to Ilandzia—

‘Mother, mother, see how my father is flying towards us on his chestnut horse !’

And together they hasten to meet the advancing horseman. With the keen-sighted glance of love, Ilandzia has marked ere yet he has left the saddle the heavy cloud on her husband's brow, and the lines which hardship and trouble have traced. It is in vain that she pours forth expressions of love and joy into his ear, for he seemed not to hear her; in vain does she hang on his arm and lay her head on his shoulder, her eyes can win back no responding smile in his. In vain too does the little Sawka play with his sword and seek to attract him by childish caresses—his face relaxed not.

‘Let us go in,’ he says, at last, having stood motionless near the entrance; and Ilandzia starts at the sound of his voice, so changed, so sad, so hollow !

The Attaman sits down and gazes long and sadly round at the walls of the room where he has lived and been happy, and where his father and grandfather have lived before him. On each chair, each picture, his eyes hang mournfully in turn, but his gaze is longest and saddest when at last it rests on his wife and child, and a hot tear rises to his eye.

Ilandzia, all her former joy now chilled by a nameless terror, does not venture to speak for fear of disturbing his grief, and she dimly guesses that for the soul of an Attaman there can be no greater sorrow than to have seen his army perish. But she vows within her heart that her love and her care shall yet restore the light to his eyes and the smile to his lips.

After a prolonged silence Kunicki at last bids his wife tell him all that has taken place at home during his absence; then he orders and arranges his affairs as though he were going off on a distant journey, and gives instructions with regard to the education of his son.

Ilandzia listens in a kind of stupor, and a freezing sensation comes over her. With an effort at last she speaks—

‘Dearest husband, surely thou art not going off again on a new expedition? It is time to take some rest, and let us tend and console thee for all thy troubles and sufferings.’

‘No, Ilandzia,’ he answers, gloomily. ‘It is not to a new expedition that I go; and I shall rest enough, never fear.’

‘But surely thou wilt not leave us already?’ she insists as he rises and prepares to buckle on his sword. ‘Look at our little Sawka, see how he smiles and begs thee to remain,’ and she pushes her son into the father’s arms, not guessing how she is adding to his torments.

The Attaman presses the boy to his heart, and his tears rain fast and hot over the child’s curly head. Ilandzia makes one last effort before he leaves the room—

‘At least take supper with us before going, dear husband?’

‘I have no hunger.’

‘Then rest thee for an hour longer.’

‘I cannot rest to-day; by daybreak to-morrow I must be at Biala-Cerkiew, to attend the council of chiefs,’ and his voice faltered at the last words. Then calling an attendant: ‘Bring out my horse.’

‘Which horse, Father Attaman?’

‘The chestnut; it has rested sufficiently, and I shall want no other to render me this last service.’

He places one foot in the stirrup and prepares to mount; then drawing back again he once more seizes Ilandzia in his arms; passionately, almost violently he strains her to his breast, pressing fierce kisses on her pale, anxious face.

‘Come back, quickly, for I am sad,’ she murmurs into his ear; and he answers—

‘Please God that we shall meet again never more to part!’ then with a sudden movement he disengages himself from her clinging embrace and, vaulting into the saddle, rides off at furious speed, never looking round as Ilandzia’s voice keeps calling after him to return soon—very soon.

VI.

THE chestnut steed carries him with lengthy stride past the meadows where the flocks are grazing peaceably, past the orchard where the trees are bending beneath the weight of rosy-tipped blossoms, past the fields where is sprouting the green corn, which

he will never more see ripen ; and only then, when he is out of sight of the oak forest and the white house, does he slacken his speed and allow himself to think.

There is no one to see him, so he can indulge his sorrow and allow his tears to flow unchecked. It is not a joyful thing to leave a lovely wife and a beloved child ; to lose alike the joys of a family and the glory of an Attaman ; to go forth into a strange world, not knowing whither or how. And it is of his own free-will that he is going to his death ; it is his own hand which is guiding his horse by the most direct road to Biala-Cerkiew, whence he knows that he will never more return. There is no one to force him to go there, nothing to prevent him from making an evasion to Podolia—nothing—save his simple word. His gallant horse, which has carried him so often and so faithfully, could soon take him out of reach of all pursuit : but this thought does not even enter his mind. The word of an Attaman is sacred, and Kunicki will be an Attaman to the last.

The new day, which is to be the last in his life, has risen in full glory as he nears his destination. On the public place in the town the chiefs are assembled, attired in their robes of state, to do honour to the occasion. In the centre of the group stands a large wooden block, and near it a Tartar prisoner of gigantic frame and ferocious appearance is holding a mighty sabre.

The chestnut horse which bears the Attaman is descried in the distance flying over the steppe, and the sound of timbals gives notice of his approach. Everyone uncovers to receive him, and the mounted Kosaks drawn up at the gates of the town salute him with their customary cry of ‘ Long live our Attaman ! ’

Kunicki, dismounting, strokes his horse in sign of farewell. His countenance is grave and calm as he says—

‘ I trust that I am punctual, and that I have not kept you waiting, my lords ? ’

‘ Father Attaman ! Thou art punctual and faithful as thou ever wert in the field, and, moreover, it is but our duty to wait on thee.’

‘ Noble chieftains ! I have come hither in order that your sentence may be fulfilled. I place my son under your protection ; let him become a faithful Kosak and fight for the liberty of his country, and may he be more fortunate than his father has been.’

‘ We shall bring him up to be worthy of such a father,’ answers the most ancient of the chiefs.

‘ I salute my companions in misfortune, and wish you all health

and prosperity,' continues Kunicki, ' and may the Kosak people ever be great and glorious.'

'Father Attaman! Thou hast acted nobly and as befits an Attaman. May our Kosaks follow thine example, and ever die as bravely. Achmet, prepare to do thy work.'

The Attaman kneels down, uncovers himself, placing his esapka with the crane's feather by his side, and after a short prayer lays his head upon the block.

The gigantic Tartar rolls up his sleeves to the shoulders, raises his sabre, and makes it whistle twice through the air; the third time it descends with unerring aim, the Attaman's head has bounded from the block, and rolled some paces off on the ground.

With much pomp and ceremony the body was raised up and placed on a bier of cedar wood, draped with costly hangings, and was carried to the grave, followed by a stately procession of chiefs and Kosaks, the church bells ringing a mournful dirge for the death of the Father Attaman.

For many weeks and months they mourned for Kunicki, the bravest, wisest, and most beloved Attaman ever known, and all alike bewailed the cruel fate which had cut short this noble life.

And Ilandzia, in the white house near the oak forest, mourned for him till the end of her days.

*Prince Otto :**A ROMANCE.*

BY R. L. STEVENSON.

BOOK II.—OF LOVE AND POLITICS.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRINCE AND THE ENGLISH TRAVELLER.

SO far Otto read, with waxing indignation ; and here his fury overflowed. He tossed the roll upon the table and stood up. ‘This man,’ he said, ‘is a devil. A filthy imagination, an ear greedy of evil, a ponderous malignity of thought and language : I grow like him by the reading ! Chancellor, where is this fellow lodged ?’

‘He was committed to the Flag Tower,’ replied Greisengesang, ‘in the Gamiani apartment.’

‘Lead me to him,’ said the Prince ; and then a thought striking him, ‘Was it for that,’ he asked, ‘that I found so many sentries in the garden ?’

‘Your Highness, I am unaware,’ answered Greisengesang, true to his policy. ‘The disposition of the guards is a matter distinct from my functions.’

Otto turned upon the old man fiercely, but ere he had time to speak, Gotthold touched him on the arm. He swallowed his wrath with a great effort. ‘It is well,’ he said, taking the roll. ‘Follow me to the Flag Tower.’

The Chancellor gathered himself together, and the two set forward. It was a long and complicated voyage ; for the library was in the wing of the new buildings, and the tower which carried the flag was in the old schloss upon the garden. By a great variety of stairs and corridors they came out at last upon a patch of gravelled court ; the garden, with a flash of green, peeped through a high grating ; tall, old, gabled buildings mounted on every side ; stage after stage, the Flag Tower climbed into the blue ; and high over all, among the building daws, the yellow banner flaunted in the wind. A sentinel at the foot of the tower stairs

presented arms ; another paced the first landing ; and a third was stationed before the door of the extemporised prison.

‘ We guard this mud-bag like a jewel,’ Otto sneered.

The Gamiani apartment was so called from an Italian doctor who had imposed on the credulity of a former Prince. The rooms were large, airy, pleasant, and looked upon the garden ; but the walls were of great thickness (for the tower was old) and the windows were heavily barred. The Prince, followed by the Chancellor, still trotting to keep up with him, brushed swiftly through the little library and the long saloon, and burst like a thunderbolt into the bedroom at the further end. Sir John was finishing his toilet ; a man of fifty, hard, uncompromising, able, with the eye and teeth of physical courage. He was unmoved by the irruption, and bowed with a sort of sneering ease.

‘ To what am I to attribute the honour of this visit ? ’ he asked.

‘ You have eaten my bread,’ replied Otto, ‘ you have taken my hand, you have been received under my roof. When did I fail you in courtesy ? What have you asked that was not granted as to an honoured guest ? And here, sir,’ tapping fiercely on the manuscript, ‘ here is your return.’

‘ Your Highness has read my papers ? ’ said the Baronet. ‘ I am honoured, indeed. But the sketch is most imperfect. I shall now have much to add. I can say that the Prince, whom I had accused of idleness, is zealous in the department of police, taking upon himself those duties that are most distasteful. I shall be able to relate the burlesque incident of my arrest, and the singular interview with which you honour me at present. For the rest, I have already communicated with my Ambassador at Vienna ; and unless you propose to murder me, I shall be at liberty, whether you please or not, within the week. For I hardly fancy the future empire of Grünwald is yet ripe to go to war with England. I conceive I am a little more than quits. I owe you no explanation ; yours has been the wrong. You, if you have studied my writing with intelligence, owe me a large debt of gratitude. And to conclude, as I have not yet finished my toilet, I imagine the courtesy of a turnkey to a prisoner would induce you to withdraw.’

There was some paper on the table, and Otto, sitting down, wrote a passport in the name of Sir John Crabtree.

‘ Affix the seal, Herr Cancellarius,’ he said, in his most princely manner, as he rose.

Greisengesang produced a red portfolio, and affixed the seal in the unpoetic guise of an adhesive stamp ; nor did his perturbed and clumsy movements at all lessen the comedy of the performance. Sir John looked on with a malign enjoyment ; and Otto chafed, regretting, when too late, the unnecessary royalty of his command and gesture. But at length the Chancellor had finished his piece of prestidigitation, and, without waiting for an order, had countersigned the passport. Thus regularised, he returned it to Otto with a bow.

‘ You will now,’ said the Prince, ‘ order one of my own carriages to be prepared ; see it, with your own eyes, charged with Sir John’s effects, and have it waiting within the hour behind the Pheasant House. Sir John departs this morning for Vienna.’

The Chancellor took his elaborate departure.

‘ Here, sir, is your passport,’ said Otto, turning to the Baronet. ‘ I regret it from my heart that you have met inhospitable usage.’

‘ Well, there will be no English war,’ returned Sir John.

‘ Nay, sir,’ said Otto, ‘ you surely owe me your civility. Matters are now changed, and we stand again upon the footing of two gentlemen. It was not I who ordered your arrest ; I returned late last night from hunting ; and as you cannot blame me for your imprisonment, you may even thank me for your freedom.’

‘ And yet you read my papers,’ said the traveller, shrewdly.

‘ There, sir, I was wrong,’ returned Otto ; ‘ and for that I ask your pardon. You can scarce refuse it, for your own dignity, to one who is a plexus of weaknesses. Nor was the fault entirely mine. Had the papers been innocent, it would have been at most an indiscretion. Your own guilt is the sting of my offence.’

Sir John regarded Otto with an approving twinkle ; then he bowed, but still in silence.

‘ Well, sir, as you are now at your entire disposal, I have a favour to beg of your indulgence,’ continued the Prince. ‘ I have to request that you will walk with me alone into the garden, so soon as your convenience permits.’

‘ From the moment that I am a free man,’ Sir John replied, this time with perfect courtesy, ‘ I am wholly at your Highness’s command ; and if you will excuse a rather summary toilet, I will even follow you as I am.’

‘ I thank you, sir,’ said Otto.

So without more delay, the Prince leading, the pair proceeded down through the echoing stairway of the tower, and out through the grating, into the ample air and sunshine of the morning, and

among the terraces and flower-beds of the garden. They crossed the fishpond, where the carp were leaping as thick as bees ; they mounted, one after another, the various flights of stairs, snowed upon, as they went, with April blossoms, and marching in time to the great orchestra of birds. Nor did Otto pause till they had reached the highest terrace of the garden. Here was a gate into the park, and hard by, under a tuft of laurel, a marble garden seat. Hence they looked down on the green tops of many elm-trees, where the rooks were busy ; and, beyond that, upon the palace roof, and the yellow banner flying in the blue. ‘I pray you to be seated, sir,’ said Otto.

Sir John complied without a word ; and for some seconds Otto walked to and fro before him, plunged in angry thought. The birds were all singing for a wager.

‘Sir,’ said the Prince at length, turning towards the Englishman, ‘you are to me, except by the conventions of society, a perfect stranger. Of your character and wishes I am ignorant. I have never wittingly disengaged you. There is a difference in station, which I desire to waive. I would, if you still think me entitled to so much consideration—I would be regarded simply as a gentleman. Now, sir, I did wrong to glance at these papers, which I here return to you ; but if curiosity be undignified, as I am free to own, falsehood is both cowardly and cruel. I opened your roll ; and what did I find—what did I find about my wife ? Lies !’ he broke out. ‘They are lies ! There are not, so help me God ! four words of truth in your intolerable libel ! You are a man ; you are old and might be the girl’s father ; you are a gentleman ; you are a scholar and have learned refinement ; and you rake together all this vulgar scandal, and propose to print it in a public book ! Such is your chivalry ! But, thank God, sir, she has still a husband. You say, sir, in that paper in your hand, that I am a bad fencer ; I have to request from you a lesson in the art. The park is close behind ; yonder is the Pheasant House, where you will find your carriage ; should I fall, you know, sir—you have written it in your paper—how little my movements are regarded ; I am in the custom of disappearing ; it will be one more disappearance ; and long before it has awakened a remark, you may be safe across the border.’

‘You will observe,’ said Sir John, ‘that what you ask is impossible.’

‘And if I struck you?’ cried the Prince, with a sudden, menacing flash.

‘It would be a cowardly blow,’ returned the Baronet, unmoved, ‘for it would make no change. I cannot draw upon a reigning sovereign.’

‘And it is this man, to whom you dare not offer satisfaction, that you choose to insult!’ cried Otto.

‘Pardon me,’ said the traveller, ‘you are unjust. It is because you are a reigning sovereign that I cannot fight with you; and it is for the same reason that I have a right to criticise your action and your wife. You are in everything a public creature; you belong to the public, body and bone. You have with you the law, the muskets of the army, and the eyes of spies. We, on our side, have but one weapon—truth.’

‘Truth!’ echoed the Prince, with a gesture.

There was another silence.

‘Your Highness,’ said Sir John at last, ‘you must not expect grapes from a thistle. I am old and a cynic. Nobody cares a rush for me; and on the whole, after the present interview, I scarce know anybody that I like better than I like yourself. You see, I have changed my mind, and have the uncommon virtue to avow the change. I tear up this stuff before you, here in your own garden; I ask your pardon, I ask the pardon of the Princess; and I give you my word of honour as a gentleman and an old man, that, when my book of travels shall appear, it shall not contain so much as the name of Grünwald. And yet it was a racy chapter! But had your Highness only read about the other courts! I am a carrion crow; but it is not my fault after all that the world is such a nauseous kennel.’

‘Sir,’ said Otto, ‘is the eye not jaundiced?’

‘Nay,’ cried the traveller, ‘very likely. I am one who goes sniffing; I am no poet. I believe in a better future for the world; or, at all accounts, I do most potently disbelieve in the present. Rotten eggs is the burthen of my song. But indeed, your Highness, when I meet with any merit, I do not think that I am slow to recognise it. This is a day that I shall still recall with gratitude, for I have found a sovereign with some manly virtues; and for once—old courtier and old radical as I am—it is from the heart and quite sincerely that I can request the honour of kissing your Highness’s hand.’

‘Nay, sir,’ said Otto, ‘to my heart!’

And the Englishman, taken at unawares, was clasped for a moment in the Prince’s arms.

‘And now, sir,’ added Otto, ‘there is the Pheasant House;

close behind it you will find my carriage, which I pray you to accept. God speed you to Vienna !'

'In the impetuosity of youth,' replied Sir John, 'your Highness has overlooked one circumstance. I am still fasting.'

'Well, sir,' said Otto smiling, 'you are your own master; you may go or stay. But I warn you, your friend may prove less powerful than your enemies. The Prince, indeed, is thoroughly acquired you; he has all the will to help; but to whom do I speak?—you know better than I do, he is not alone in Grünewald.'

'There is a deal in position,' returned the traveller, gravely nodding. 'Gondremark loves to temporise; his policy is below ground, and he fears all open courses; and now that I have seen you act with so much spirit, I will cheerfully risk myself on your protection. Who knows? You may be yet the better man.'

'Do you indeed believe so?' cried the Prince. 'You put life into my heart!'

'I will give up sketching portraits,' said the Baronet. 'I am a blind owl; I had misread you strangely. And yet remember this: a sprint is one thing, and to run all the day another. For I still mistrust your constitution: the short nose, the hair and eyes of several complexions; no, they are diagnostic; and I must end, I see, as I began.'

'I am still a singing chambermaid?' said Otto.

'Nay, your Highness, I pray you to forget what I had written,' said Sir John; 'I am not like Pilate; and the chapter is no more. Bury it, if you love me.'

CHAPTER IV.

WHILE THE PRINCE IS IN THE ANTEROOM

GREATLY comforted by the exploits of the morning, the Prince turned towards the Princess's anteroom, bent on a more difficult enterprise. The curtains rose before him, the usher called his name, and he entered the room with an exaggeration of his usual mincing and airy dignity. There were about a score of persons waiting, principally ladies; it was one of the few societies in Grünewald where Otto knew himself to be popular; and while a maid of honour made her exit by a side door to announce his arrival to the Princess, he moved round the apartment, collecting

homage and bestowing compliments, with friendly grace. Had this been the sum of his duties, he had been an admirable monarch. Lady after lady was impartially honoured by his attention.

‘Madam,’ he said to one, ‘how does this happen? I find you daily more adorable.’

‘And your Highness daily browner,’ replied the lady. ‘We began equal; O, there I will be bold; we have both beautiful complexions. But while I study mine, your Highness tans himself.’

‘A perfect negro, madam; and what so fitly—being beauty’s slave?’ said Otto. ‘Madame Grafinski, when is our next play? I have just heard that I am a bad actor.’

‘*O ciel!*’ cried Madame Grafinski. ‘Who could venture? What a bear!’

‘An excellent man, I can assure you,’ returned Otto.

‘O, never! O, is it possible?’ fluted the lady. ‘Your Highness plays like an angel.’

‘You must be right, madam; who could speak falsely and yet look so charming?’ said the Prince. ‘But this gentleman, it seems, would have preferred me playing like an actor.’

A sort of hum, a falsetto, feminine cooing, greeted the tiny sally; and Otto expanded like a peacock. This warm atmosphere of women and flattery and idle chatter, pleased him to the marrow.

‘Madame von Eisenthal, your coiffure is delicious,’ he remarked.

‘Everyone was saying so,’ said one.

‘If I have pleased Prince Charming!’ And Madame von Eisenthal swept him a deep curtsey with a killing glance of adoration.

‘It is new?’ he asked. ‘Vienna fashion?’

‘Mint new,’ replied the lady, ‘for your Highness’s return. I felt young this morning; it was a premonition. But why, Prince, do you ever leave us?’

‘For the pleasure of the return,’ said Otto. ‘I am like a dog; I must bury my bone, and then come back to gloat upon it.’

‘O, a bone! Fie, what a comparison! You have brought back the manners of the wood,’ returned the lady.

‘Madam, it is what the dog has dearest,’ said the Prince. ‘But I observe Madame von Rosen.’

And Otto, leaving the group to which he had been piping, stepped towards the embrasure of a window where a lady stood.

The Countess von Rosen had hitherto been silent, and a thought depressed; but on the approach of Otto she began to brighten. She was tall, slim as a nymph, and of a very airy

carriage ; and her face, which was already beautiful in repose, lightened and changed, flashed into smiles and glowed with lovely colour, at the touch of animation. She was a good vocalist ; and, even in speech, her voice commanded a great range of changes, the low notes rich with tenor quality, the upper ringing, on the brink of laughter, into music. A gem of many facets and variable hues of fire ; a woman who withheld the better portion of her beauty, and then, in a caressing second, flashed it like a weapon full on the beholder ; now merely a tall figure and a sallow handsome face, with the evidences of a reckless temper ; anon opening like a flower to life and colour, mirth and tenderness : Madame von Rosen had always a dagger in reserve for the despatch of ill-assured admirers. She met Otto with the dart of tender gaiety.

‘ You have come to me at last, Prince Cruel,’ she said. ‘ Butterfly ! Well, and am I not to kiss your hand ? ’ she added.

‘ Madam, it is I who must kiss yours.’ And Otto bowed and kissed it.

‘ You deny me every indulgence,’ she said, smiling.

‘ And now what news in Court ? ’ inquired the Prince. ‘ I come to you for my gazette.’

‘ Ditch-water ! ’ she replied. ‘ The world is all asleep, grown grey in slumber ; I do not remember any waking movement since quite an eternity ; and the last thing in the nature of a sensation was the last time my governess was allowed to box my ears. But yet I do myself and your unfortunate enchanted palace some injustice. Here is the last—O positively ! ’ And she told him the story from behind her fan, with many glances, many cunning strokes of the narrator’s art. The others had drawn away ; for it was understood that Madame von Rosen was in favour with the Prince. None the less, however, did the Countess lower her voice at times to within a semitone of whispering ; and the pair leaned together over the narrative.

‘ Do you know,’ said Otto, laughing, ‘ you are the only entertaining woman in this earth ? ’

‘ O, you have found out so much ? ’ she cried.

‘ Yes, madam, I grow wiser with advancing years,’ he returned.

‘ Years ! ’ she repeated. ‘ Do you name the traitors ? I do not believe in years ; the calendar is a delusion.’

‘ You must be right, madam,’ replied the Prince. ‘ For six years that we have been good friends, I have observed you to grow younger.’

'Flatterer!' cried she, and then with a change, 'But why should I say so,' she added, 'when I protest I think the same? A week ago I had a council with my Father Director, the glass; and the glass replied, "Not yet!" I confess my face in this way once a month. O! a very solemn moment. Do you know what I shall do when the mirror answers: "Now"?'

'I cannot guess,' said he.

'No more can I,' returned the Countess. 'There is such a choice! Suicide, gambling, a nunnery, a volume of memoirs, or politics—the last, I am afraid.'

'It is a dull trade,' said Otto.

'Nay,' she replied, 'it is a trade I rather like. It is after all first cousin to gossip, which no one can deny to be amusing. For instance, if I were to tell you that the Princess and the Baron rode out together daily to inspect the cannon, it is either a piece of politics or scandal, as I turn my phrase. I am the alchemist that makes the transmutation. They have been everywhere together since you left,' she continued, brightening as she saw Otto darken—'that is a poor snippet of malicious gossip; and they were everywhere cheered—and with that addition all becomes political intelligence.'

'Let us change the subject,' said Otto.

'I was about to propose it,' she replied, 'or rather to pursue the politics. Do you know? this war is popular—O, but popular!—popular to the length of cheering Princess Seraphina.'

'All things, madam, are possible,' said the Prince; 'and this among others, that we may be going into war, but I give you my word of honour I do not know with whom.'

'And you put up with it?' she cried. 'I have no pretensions to morality; and I confess I have always abominated the lamb, and nourished a romantic feeling for the wolf. O, be done with lambiness! Let us see there is a prince, for I am weary of the distaff.'

'Madam,' said Otto, 'I thought you were of that faction.'

'I should be of yours, *mon Prince*, if you had one,' she retorted. 'Is it true that you have no ambition? There was a man once in England whom they called the Kingmaker. Do you know?' she added, 'I fancy I could make a prince?'

'Some day, madam,' said Otto, 'I may ask you to help make a farmer.'

'Is that a riddle?' asked the Countess.

'It is,' replied the Prince, 'and a very good one too.'

‘Tit for tat. I will ask you another,’ she returned. ‘Where is Gondremark?’

‘The Prime Minister? In the prime-ministry, no doubt,’ said Otto.

‘Precisely,’ said the Countess; and she pointed with her fan to the door of the Princess’s apartments. ‘You and I, *mon Prince*, are in the anteroom. You think me unkind,’ she added. ‘Try me and you will see. Set me a task, put me a question; there is no enormity I am not capable of doing to oblige you, and no secret that I am not ready to betray.’

‘Nay, madam, but I respect my friend too much,’ he answered, kissing her hand. ‘I would rather remain ignorant of all. We fraternise like foemen soldiers at the outposts, but let each be true to his own army.’

‘Ah,’ she cried, ‘if men were generous like you, it would be worth while to be a woman!’ Yet, judging by her looks, his generosity, if anything, had disappointed her; she seemed to seek a remedy, and, having found it, brightened once again. ‘And now,’ she said, ‘may I dismiss my sovereign? This is rebellion and a *cas pendable*; but what am I to do? My bear is jealous!’

‘Madam, enough!’ cried Otto. ‘Ahasuerus reaches you the sceptre; more, he will obey you in all points. I should have been a dog to come to whistling.’

And so the Prince departed, and fluttered round Grafinski and Von Eisenthal. But the Countess knew the use of her offensive weapons, and had left a pleasant arrow in the Prince’s heart. That Gondremark was jealous—here was an agreeable revenge! And Madame von Rosen, as the occasion of the jealousy, appeared to him in a new light.

CHAPTER V.

..... GONDREMARK IS IN MY LADY’S CHAMBER.

THE Countess von Rosen spoke the truth. The great Prime Minister of Grünwald was already closeted with Seraphina. The toilet was over; and the Princess, tastefully arrayed, sat face to face with a tall mirror. Sir John’s description was unkindly true, true in terms and yet a libel, a misogynistic masterpiece. Her forehead was perhaps too high, but it became her; her figure somewhat stooped, but every detail was formed and finished like a

gem; her hand, her foot, her ear, the set of her comely head, were all dainty and accordant; if she was not beautiful, she was vivid, changeful, coloured, and pretty with a thousand various prettinesses; and her eyes, if they indeed rolled too consciously, yet rolled to purpose. They were her most attractive feature, yet they continually bore eloquent false witness to her thoughts; for while she herself, in the depths of her immature, unsoftened heart, was given altogether to manlike ambition and the desire of power, the eyes were by turns bold, inviting, fiery, melting, and artful, like the eyes of a rapacious siren. And artful, in a sense, she was. Chafing that she was not a man and could not shine by action, she had conceived a woman's part, of answerable domination; she sought to subjugate for by-ends, to rain influence and be fancy free; and while she loved not man, loved to see man obey her. It is a common girl's ambition. Such was perhaps that lady of the glove, who sent her lover to the lions. But the snare is laid alike for male and female, and the world most artfully contrived.

Near her, in a low chair, Gondremark had arranged his limbs into a cat-like attitude, high-shouldered, stooping, and submiss. The formidable blue jowl of the man, and the dull, bilious eye, set perhaps a higher value on his evident desire to please. His face was marked by capacity, temper, and a kind of bold, piratical dishonesty, which it would be calumnious to call deceit. His manners, as he smiled upon the Princess, were overfine, yet hardly elegant.

'Possibly,' said the Baron, 'I should now proceed to take my leave. I must not keep my sovereign in the anteroom. Let us come at once to a decision.'

'It cannot, cannot be put off?' she asked.

'It is impossible,' answered Gondremark. 'Your Highness sees it for herself. In the earlier stages, we might imitate the serpent; but for the ultimatum, there is no choice but to be bold like lions. Had the Prince chosen to remain away, it had been better; but we have gone too far forward to delay.'

'What can have brought him?' she cried. 'To-day of all days?'

'The marplot, madam, has the instinct of his nature,' returned Gondremark. 'But you exaggerate the peril. Think, madam, how far we have prospered and against what odds! Shall a Featherhead?—but no!' And he blew upon his fingers lightly with a laugh.

‘Featherhead,’ she replied, ‘is still the Prince of Grünwald.’

‘On your sufferance only, and so long as you shall please to be indulgent,’ said the Baron. ‘There are rights of nature; power to the powerful is the law. If he shall think to cross your destiny—well, you have heard of the brazen and the earthen pot.’

‘Do you call me pot? You are ungallant, Baron,’ laughed the Princess.

‘Before we are done with your glory, I shall have called you by many different titles,’ he replied.

The girl flushed with pleasure. ‘But Frédéric is still the Prince, *Monsieur le Flatteur*,’ she said. ‘You do not propose a revolution?—you of all men?’

‘Dear madam, when it is already made!’ he cried. ‘The Prince reigns indeed in the almanack; but my Princess reigns and rules.’ And he looked at her with a fond admiration that made the heart of Seraphina swell. Looking on her huge slave, she drank the intoxicating joys of power. Meanwhile he continued, with that sort of massive archness that so ill became him, ‘She has but one fault; there is but one danger in the great career that I foresee for her. May I name it? may I be so irreverent? It is in herself—her heart is soft.’

‘Her courage is faint, Baron,’ said the Princess. ‘Suppose we have judged ill, suppose we were defeated?’

‘Defeated, madam?’ returned the Baron, with a touch of ill-humour. ‘Is the dog defeated by the hare? Our troops are all cantoned along the frontier; in five hours the vanguard of five thousand bayonets shall be hammering on the gates of Brandenau; and in all Gerolstein there are not fifteen hundred men who can manœuvre. It is as simple as a sum. There can be no resistance.’

‘It is no great exploit,’ she said. ‘Is that what you call glory? It is like beating a child.’

‘The courage, madam, is diplomatic,’ he replied. ‘We take a grave step; we fix the eyes of Europe, for the first time, on Grünwald; and in the negotiations of the next three months, mark me, we stand or fall. It is there, madam, that I shall have to depend upon your counsels,’ he added, almost gloomily. ‘If I had not seen you at work, if I did not know the fertility of your mind, I own I should tremble for the consequence. But it is in this field that men must recognise their inability. All the great negotiators, when they have not been women, have had women at their elbows. Madame de Pompadour was ill served; she had not

found her Gondremark ; but what a mighty politician ! Catherine de Medici, too, what justice of sight, what readiness of means, what elasticity against defeat ! But alas ! madam, her Featherheads were her own children ; and she had that one touch of vulgarity, that one trait of the good-wife, that she suffered family ties and affections to confine her liberty ?

These singular views of history, strictly *ad usum Seraphinae*, did not weave their usual soothing spell over the Princess. It was plain that she had taken a momentary distaste to her own resolutions ; for she continued to oppose her counsellor, looking upon him out of half-closed eyes and with the shadow of a sneer upon her lips. ‘ What boys men are ! ’ she said ; ‘ what lovers of big words ! Courage, indeed ! If you had to scour pans, Herr von Gondremark, you would call it, I suppose, Domestic Courage ? ’

‘ I would, madam,’ said the Baron, stoutly, ‘ if I scoured them well. I would put a good name upon a virtue ; you will not overdo it ; they are not so enchanting in themselves.’

‘ Well, but let me see,’ she said. ‘ I wish to understand your courage. Why we asked leave, like children ! Our grannie in Berlin, our uncle in Vienna, the w^hole family, have patted us on the head and sent us forward. Cou...ge ! I wonder when I hear you ! ’

‘ My Princess is unlike herself,’ returned the Baron. ‘ She has forgotten where the peril lies. True, we have received encouragement on every hand ; but my Princess knows too well on what untenable conditions ; and she knows besides how, in the publicity of the diet, these whispered conferences are forgotten and disowned. The danger is very real’—(he raged inwardly at having to blow the very coal he had been quenching)—‘ none the less real in that it is not precisely military, but for that reason the easier to be faced. Had we to count upon your troops, although I share your Highness’s expectations of the conduct of Alvenau, we cannot forget that he has not been proved in chief command. But where negotiation is concerned, the conduct lies with us ; and with your help, I laugh at danger.’

‘ It may be so,’ said Seraphina, sighing. ‘ It is elsewhere that I see danger. The people, these abominable people—suppose they should instantly rebel ? What a figure we should make in the eyes of Europe to have undertaken an invasion, while my own throne was tottering to its fall ! ’

‘ Nay, madam,’ said Gondremark, smiling, ‘ here you are beneath yourself. What is it that feeds their discontent ? What

but the taxes? Once we have seized Gerolstein, the taxes are remitted, the sons return covered with renown, the houses are adorned with pillage, each tastes his little share of military glory, and behold us once again a happy family! "Ay," they will say, in each other's long ears, "the Princess knew what she was about; she was in the right of it; she has a head upon her shoulders; and here we are, you see, better off than before." But why should I say all this? It is what my Princess pointed out to me herself; it was by these reasons that she converted me to this adventure.'

'I think, Herr von Gondremark,' said Seraphina, somewhat tartly, 'you often attribute your own sagacity to your Princess.'

For a second Gondremark staggered under the shrewdness of the attack; the next, he had perfectly recovered. 'Do I?' he said. 'It is very possible. I have observed a similar tendency in your Highness.'

It was so openly spoken, and appeared so just, that Seraphina breathed again. Her vanity had been alarmed, and the greatness of the relief improved her spirits. 'Well,' she said, 'all this is little to the purpose. We are keeping Frédéric without, and I am still ignorant of our line of battle. Come, co-admiral, let us consult.'

'Admiral?' replied the Baron, smiling. 'How many years before we have an admiral in Grünwald?'

'It is a long way to the sea, *Monsieur l'ambitieux*; and we cannot have an admiral until we have a port,' she answered.

'O, a long way!' said Gondremark. 'When a state begins growing, it grows by geometrical progression.'

'Come,' she said, 'you trifle, *Monsieur mon premier ministre*. How am I to receive him now? And what are we to do if he should appear at the council?'

'Now,' he answered. 'I shall leave him to my Princess for just now! I have seen her at work. Send him off to his theatricals! But in all gentleness,' he added. 'Would it, for instance, would it displease my sovereign to affect a headache?'

'Never!' said she. 'The woman who can manage, like the man who can fight, must never shrink from an encounter. The knight must not disgrace his weapons.'

'Then let me pray my *belle dame sans merci*,' he returned, 'to affect the only virtue that she lacks. Be pitiful to the poor young man; affect an interest in his hunting; be weary of politics; find in his society, as it were, a grateful repose from dry considerations. Does my Princess authorise the line of battle?'

‘Well, that is a trifle,’ answered Seraphina. ‘The council—there is the point.’

‘The council?’ cried Gondremark. ‘Permit me, madam.’ And he rose and proceeded to flutter about the room, counterfeiting Otto both in voice and gesture not unhappily. “What is there to-day, Herr von Gondremark? Ah, Herr Cancellarius, a new wig! You cannot deceive me; I know every wig in Grünewald; I have the sovereign’s eye. What are these papers about? Oh, I see. O, certainly. Surely, surely, I wager none of you remarked that wig. By all means. I know nothing about that. Dear me, are there as many as all that? Well, you can sign them; you have the procuration. You see, Herr Cancellarius, I knew your wig.” And so, concluded Gondremark, resuming his own voice, ‘our sovereign, by the particular grace of God, enlightens and supports his privy councillors.’

But when the Baron turned to Seraphina for approval, he found her frozen. ‘You are pleased to be witty, Herr von Gondremark,’ she said, ‘and have perhaps forgotten where you are. But these rehearsals are apt to be misleading. Your master, the Prince of Grünewald, is sometimes more exacting.’

Gondremark cursed her in his soul. Of all injured vanities, that of the reproved buffoon is the most savage; and when grave issues are involved, these petty stabs become unbearable. But Gondremark was a man of iron; he showed nothing; he did not even, like the common trickster, retreat because he had presumed, but held to his point bravely. ‘Madam,’ he said, ‘if, as you say, he prove exacting, we must take the bull by the horns.’

‘We shall see,’ she said, and she arranged her skirt like one about to rise. Temper, scorn, disgust, all the more acrid feelings, became her like jewels; and she now looked her best.

‘Pray God they quarrel,’ thought Gondremark. ‘The damned minx may fail me yet, unless they quarrel. It is time to let him in. Zz—fight, dogs!’ Consequent on these reflections, he bent a stiff knee and chivalrously kissed the Princess’s hand. ‘My Princess,’ he said, ‘must now dismiss her servant. I have much to arrange against the hour of council.’

‘Go,’ she said, and rose.

And as Gondremark tripped out of a private door, she touched a bell, and gave the order to admit the Prince.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRINCE DELIVERS A LECTURE ON MARRIAGE, WITH PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF DIVORCE.

WITH what a world of excellent intentions Otto entered his wife's cabinet! how fatherly, how tender, how morally affecting were the words he had prepared! Nor was Seraphina unamiably inclined. Her usual fear of Otto as a marplot in her great designs was now swallowed up in a passing distrust of the designs themselves. For Gondremark, besides, she had conceived an angry horror. In her heart she did not like the Baron. Behind his impudent servility, behind the devotion which, with indelicate delicacy, he still forced on her attention, she divined the grossness of his nature. So a man may be proud of having tamed a bear, and yet sicken at his captive's odour. And above all, she had certain jealous intimations that the man was false, and the deception double. True, she falsely trifled with his love; but he, perhaps, was only trifling with her vanity. The insolence of his late mimicry and the odium of her own position as she sat and watched it, lay besides like a load upon her conscience. She met Otto, almost with a sense of guilt, and yet she welcomed him as a deliverer from ugly things.

But the wheels of an interview are at the mercy of a thousand ruts; and even at Otto's entrance, the first jolt occurred. Gondremark, he saw, was gone; but there was the chair drawn close for consultation; and it pained him, not only that this man had been received, but that he should depart with such an air of secrecy. Struggling with this twinge, it was somewhat sharply that he dismissed the attendant who had brought him in.

'You make yourself at home, *chez moi*,' she said, a little ruffled both by his tone of command and by the glance he had thrown upon the chair.

'Madam,' replied Otto, 'I am here so seldom that I have almost the rights of a stranger.'

'You choose your own associates, Frédéric,' she said.

'I am here to speak of it,' he returned. 'It is now four years since we were married; and these four years, Seraphina, have not perhaps been happy either for you or for me. I am well aware I was unsuitable to be your husband. I was not young, I had no ambition, I was a trifler; and you despised me, I dare not

say unjustly. But to do justice on both sides you must bear in mind how I have acted. When I found it amused you to play the part of princess on this little stage, did I not immediately resign to you my box of toys, this Grünewald? And when I found I was distasteful as a husband, could any husband have been less intrusive? You will tell me that I have no feelings, no preference, and thus no credit; that I go before the wind; that all this was in my character; and indeed, one thing is true, that it is easy, too easy, to leave things undone; but Seraphina, I begin to learn it is not always wise. If I were too old and too uncongenial for your husband, I should still have remembered that I was the Prince of that country to which you came, a visitor and a child. In that relation also, there were duties, and these duties I have not performed.'

To claim the advantage of superior age is to give sure offence. 'Duty!' laughed Seraphina, 'and on your lips, Frédéric! You make me laugh. What fancy is this? Go, flirt with the maids and be a prince in Dresden China, as you look. Enjoy yourself, *mon enfant*, and leave duty and the state to us.'

The plural grated on the Prince. 'I have enjoyed myself too much,' he said, 'since enjoyment is the word. And yet there were much to say upon the other side. You must suppose me desperately fond of hunting. But indeed there were days when I found a great deal of interest in what it was courtesy to call my government. And I have always had some claim to taste; I could tell live happiness from dull routine; and between hunting, and the throne of Austria, and your society, my choice had never wavered, had the choice been mine. You were a girl, a bud, when you were given me—'

'Heavens!' she cried, 'is this to be a love scene?'

'I am never ridiculous,' he said; 'it is my only merit; and you may be certain this shall be a scene of marriage à la mode. But when I remember the beginning, it is bare courtesy to speak in sorrow. Be just, madam: you would think me strangely uncivil to recall these days without the decency of a regret. Be yet a little juster, and own, if only in complaisance, that you yourself regret that past.'

'I have nothing to regret,' said the Princess. 'You surprise me. I thought you were so happy.'

'Happy and happy, there are so many hundred ways,' said Otto. 'A man may be happy in revolt; he may be happy in sleep; wine, change and travel make him happy; virtue, they say,

will do the like—I have not tried ; and they say also that in old, quiet and habitual marriages, there is yet another happiness. Happy, yes ; I am happy if you like ; but I will tell you frankly, I was happier when I brought you home.'

'Well,' said the Princess, not without constraint, 'it seems you changed your mind.'

'Not I,' returned Otto ; 'I never changed. Do you remember, Seraphina, on our way home, when you saw the roses in the lane, and I got out and plucked them ? It was a narrow lane between great trees ; and at the end the sunset was all gold, and overhead the rooks were flying. There were nine, nine red roses ; you gave me a kiss for each, and I told myself that every rose and every kiss should stand for a year of love. Well, in eighteen months there was an end. But do you fancy, Seraphina, that my heart has altered ?'

'I am sure I cannot tell,' she said, like an automaton.

'It has not,' the Prince continued. 'There is nothing ridiculous, even from a husband, in a love that owns itself unhappy and that asks no more. I built on sand ; pardon me, I do not breathe a reproach—I built, I suppose, upon my own infirmities, but I put my heart in the building, and it still lies among the ruins.'

'How very poetical !' she said with a little choking laugh, unknown relentings, unfamiliar softnesses, moving within her. 'What would you be at ?' she added, hardening her voice.

'I would be at this,' he answered ; 'and hard it is to say. I would be at this :—Seraphina, I am your husband, after all, and a poor fool that loves you. Understand,' he cried almost fiercely, 'I am no suppliant husband ; what your love refuses, I would scorn to receive from your pity. I do not ask, I would not take it. And for jealousy, what ground have I ? A dog-in-the-manger jealousy is a thing the dogs may laugh at. But at least, in the world's eye, I am still your husband ; and I ask you if you treat me fairly ? I keep to myself, I leave you free, I have given you in everything your will. What do you in return ? I find, Seraphina, that you have been too thoughtless. But between persons such as we, in our conspicuous station, particular care and a particular courtesy are owing. Scandal is perhaps not easy to avoid ; but it is hard to bear.'

'Scandal !' she cried, with a deep breath. 'Scandal ! It is for this you have been driving !'

'I have tried to tell you how I feel,' he replied. 'I have told you that I love you—love you in vain—a bitter thing for a

husband; I have laid myself open that I might speak without offence. And now that I have begun, I will go on and finish.'

'I demand it,' she said. 'What is this about?'

Otto flushed crimson. 'I have to say what I would fain not,' he answered. 'I counsel you to see less of Gondremark.'

'Of Gondremark? And why?' she asked.

'Your intimacy is the ground of scandal, madam,' said Otto, firmly enough—'of a scandal that is agony to me, and would be crushing to your parents if they knew it.'

'You are the first to bring me word of it,' said she. 'I thank you.'

'You have perhaps cause,' he replied. 'Perhaps I am alone among your friends—'

'O, leave my friends alone,' she interrupted. 'My friends are of a different stamp. You have come to me here and made a parade of sentiment. When have I last seen you? I have governed your kingdom for you in the meanwhile, and there I got no help. At last, when I am weary with a man's work, and you are weary of your playthings, you return to make me a scene of conjugal reproaches—the grocer and his wife! The positions are too much reversed; and you should understand, at least, that I cannot at the same time do your work of government and behave myself like a little girl. Scandal is the atmosphere in which we live—we princes; it is what a prince should know. You play an odious part. Do you believe this rumour?'

'Madam, should I be here?' said Otto.

'It is what I want to know!' she cried, the tempest of her scorn increasing. 'Suppose you did—I say, suppose you did believe it?'

'I should make it my business to suppose the contrary,' he answered.

'I thought so. O, you are made of baseness!' said she.

'Madam,' he cried, roused at last, 'enough of this. You wilfully misunderstand my attitude; you outwear my patience. In the name of your parents, in my own name, I summon you to be more circumspect.'

'Is this a request, *Monsieur mon mari?*' she demanded.

'Madam, if I chose, I might command,' said Otto.

'You might, sir, as the law stands, make me prisoner,' returned Seraphina. 'Short of that you will gain nothing.'

'You will continue as before?' he asked.

'Precisely as before,' said she. 'As soon as this comedy is

over, I shall request the Freiherr von Gondremark to visit me. Do you understand?' she added, rising. 'For my part, I have done.'

'I will then ask the favour of your hand, madam,' said Otto, palpitating in every pulse with anger. 'I have to request that you will visit in my society another part of my poor house. And reassure yourself—it will not take long—and it is the last obligation that you shall have the chance to lay me under.'

'The last?' she cried. 'Most joyfully!'

She offered her hand, and he took it; on each side with an elaborate affectation, each inwardly incandescent. He led her out by the private door, following where Gondremark had passed; they threaded a corridor or two, little frequented, looking on a court, until they came at last into the Prince's suite. The first room was an armoury, hung all about with the weapons of various countries, and looking forth on the front terrace.

'Have you brought me here to slay me?' she inquired.

'I have brought you, madam, only to pass on,' replied Otto.

Next they came to a library, where an old chamberlain sat half asleep. He rose and bowed before the princely couple, asking for orders.

'You will attend us here,' said Otto.

The next stage was a gallery of pictures, where Seraphina's portrait hung conspicuous, dressed for the chase, red roses in her hair, as Otto, in the first months of marriage, had directed. He pointed to it, without a word. She raised her eyebrows in silence; and they passed still forward into a matted corridor where four doors opened. One led to Otto's bedroom; one was the private door to Seraphina's. And here, for the first time, Otto left her hand, and stepping forward, shot the bolt.

'It is long, madam,' said he, 'since it was bolted on the other side.'

'One was effectual,' returned the Princess. 'Is this all?'

'Shall I reconduct you?' he asked, bowing.

'I should prefer,' she asked, in ringing tones, 'the conduct of the Freiherr von Gondremark.'

Otto summoned the chamberlain. 'If the Freiherr von Gondremark is in the palace,' he said, 'bid him attend the Princess here.' And when the official had departed, 'Can I do more to serve you, madam?' the Prince asked.

'Thank you, no. I have been much amused,' she answered.

'I have now,' continued Otto, 'given you your liberty complete. This has been for you a miserable marriage.'

‘Miserable !’ said she.

‘It has been made light to you ; it shall be lighter still,’ continued the Prince. ‘But one thing, madam, you must still continue to bear—my father’s name, which is now yours. I leave it in your hands. Let me see you, since you will have no advice of mine, apply the more attention of your own to bear it worthily.’

‘Herr von Gondremark is long in coming,’ she remarked.

‘O Seraphina, Seraphina !’ he cried. And that was the end of their interview.

She tripped to a window and looked out ; and a little after, the chamberlain announced the Freiherr von Gondremark, who entered with something of a wild eye and changed complexion, confounded, as he was, at this unusual summons. The Princess faced round from the window with a pearly smile ; nothing but her heightened colour spoke of discomposure. Otto was pale, but he was otherwise the master of himself.

‘Herr von Gondremark,’ said he, ‘oblige me so far: reconduct the Princess to her own apartment.’

The Baron, still all at sea, offered his hand, which was smilingly accepted, and the pair sailed forth through the picture gallery.

As soon as they were gone, and Otto knew the length and breadth of his miscarriage, and how he had done the contrary of all that he intended, he stood stupefied. A fiasco so complete and sweeping, even to himself, was laughable ; and he laughed aloud in his wrath. Upon this mood there followed the sharpest violence of remorse ; and to that again, as he recalled his provocation, anger succeeded afresh. So he was tossed in spirit ; now bewailing his inconstancy and lack of temper, now flaming up in white-hot indignation and a noble pity for himself.

He paced his apartment like a leopard. There was danger in Otto, for a flash. Like a pistol he could kill at one moment, and the next he might be kicked aside. But just then, as he walked the long floors in his alternate humours, tearing his handkerchief between his hands, he was strung to his top note, every nerve attent. The pistol, you might say, was charged. And when jealousy from time to time fetched him a lash across the tenderest of his feeling, and sent a string of her fire-pictures glancing before his mind’s eye, the contraction of his face was even dangerous. He disregarded jealousy’s inventions, yet they stung. In this height of his anger, he still preserved his faith in Seraphina’s

innocence ; but the thought of her possible misconduct was still the bitterest ingredient in his pot of sorrow.

There came a knock at the door, and the chamberlain brought him a note. He took it and ground it in his hand, continuing his march, continuing his bewildered thoughts ; and some minutes had gone by before the circumstance came clearly to his mind. Then he paused and opened it. It was a pencil scratch from Gotthold, thus conceived :—

‘The council is privately summoned at once.

‘G. v. H.’

If the council was thus called before the hour, and that privately, it was plain they feared his interference. Feared : here was a sweet thought. Gotthold, too—Gotthold, who had always used and regarded him as a mere pleasant lad, had now been at the pains to warn him ; Gotthold looked for something at his hands. Well, none should be disappointed ; the Prince, too long beshadowed by the uxorious lover, should now return and shine. He summoned his valet, repaired the disorder of his appearance with elaborate care ; and then, curled, and scented, and adorned, Prince Charming in every line, but with a twitching nostril, he set forth unattended for the council.

(*To be continued.*)

The ‘Donna.’

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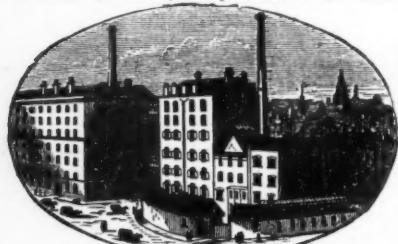
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